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N O U R M A H A L.

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VOL. II.

N O U R M A H A L,

An Oriental Romance.

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"A VISIT TO SPAIN," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



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N O U R M A H A L.



CHAPTER I.

“ Look, master, see how the white umbrellas float, like trembling lotuses, in the lake of the atmosphere. The numerous banners undulate like waves, as they play before the wind ; and now the elephants advance, their golden bells tinkling as they stride ; they are mounted by merry beves of damsels, singing songs of rejoicing, and blazing, like rays of light, with glittering jewels of variegated tints, as if they were so many portions of the heavens decorated with fragments of Indra’s bow.”

HINDOO DRAMA.

ABOUT the hour when Jehangire ascended the throne at Agra, the conspirators entered the city of Muttra, attended by twenty thousand Rajaputs, whom Man-Singh had previously stationed upon the road. While they were

halting here to take refreshment, Hussein Bey, late governor of the province of Cabul, having travelled during the night, on account of the heat of the weather, met the prince in the market-place. Hussein was on his return to Agra, having been recalled from his government by the late emperor, without any reason being assigned for such a proceeding. He was accompanied by a considerable body of Tartar cavalry, and of Afghan infantry, who voluntarily escorted him, in order to prove to the emperor the popularity and respect which he had earned by his bravery, and the generosity of his disposition while governor of Cabul. Having lavished all his fortune in the splendours of the vice-regal office, of which he had been just deprived, and feeling, moreover, that his sacrifices and labours had been ill repaid by the disgrace thus inflicted upon him, he lent a willing ear to the overtures made to him by Man-Singh, to espouse the cause of Chusero.

Many of the inhabitants of Muttra, seeing the prince supported by two chieftains of such high reputation, eagerly enlisted in his service. On their march towards Delhi, they encountered various detachments of horse and foot, on

the route to different stations. These they compelled, or induced, to join his standard ; and by the time they reached the suburbs of Delhi, their numbers assumed a formidable appearance.

Rumours of the approach of the rebel forces had already alarmed the imperial authorities at Delhi ; the inhabitants feared the entrance of so large an army, which no discipline could restrain from acts of plunder. It was resolved, therefore, that the gates should be closed, and that preparations should be made for a vigorous defence. Delhi was then surrounded by a strong wall, and by many towers, which it would have been impossible to reduce without the aid of artillery. Chusero waited before the city for some days, but finding that he had no means for capturing it, he moved forward rapidly to Lahore, where he met with no resistance.

In the mean time Jehangire, fully informed of Chusero's proceedings, issued mandates for the assemblage of an army sufficient to put down this dangerous, and to his feelings, peculiarly painful, insurrection. During the first impulses of his anger he had directed his household troops to pursue the rebels, charging Fe-

rid Bochari, on whom he conferred the chief command of the imperial forces, to bring back the prince's head without delay. But the intelligence which he received of the accessions constantly making to Chusero's party, obliged him to adopt more prudent counsels. He was much attached to his son, his eldest born, the natural heir to his throne ; he could not believe that the prince was any thing more than an instrument in the hands of Man-Singh, Hussein, and the other chieftains, who were already in open revolt against his authority, and whose real object he apprehended to be the division of the empire amongst themselves. Filled, therefore, with distrust of all the world, he determined to lead the army in person, and to contend, if necessary, with his own hand for the crown which he had derived from the valour of his ancestors.

The resolution of Jehangire to take the field at the head of a hundred thousand fighting men, necessarily caused a delay, which gave great advantages to the prince's party. It enabled the latter to repair the dilapidated fortifications of Lahore ; to collect within its walls large stores of rice and grain ; to communicate

with the subahs of Moulton and Cashmere, and to spread the seeds of revolt throughout the whole of the northern provinces. The elevation of Bochari to the chief command of the imperial troops, produced the deepest dissatisfaction amongst the nobles in general, whose pride was wounded by the elevation of the son of a Persian portrait-painter to the highest office in the emperor's gift. He had, they admitted, rendered essential service to Jehangire, by the seasonable precautions which he had adopted for securing the succession to the throne. But he had had no military experience. He had hitherto distinguished himself only as an intriguer, a parasite, and a debauchee.

The high-chancellor, Kazim Ayas, whom Jehangire nominated to that office, had indeed also been raised above the heads of many omrahs from the inferior grades of life. But he was of an ancient, though decayed family; he had, moreover, exhibited talents in the discharge of his functions, which would have secured the acquiescence of all men in his advancement, even if he had not won their favour by the graces of his mind, and the invariable modesty of his demeanour. Bochari, on the

contrary, treacherous, sanguinary, rapacious, insolent, had evinced no ability for command. His promotion to so high a degree of authority, was deemed an insult to the whole empire !

These feelings of discontent throughout the court at Agra, were, however, in some measure, appeased by the emperor's resolution to place himself at the head of the troops, destined to take part in the approaching contest. Many of the omrahs, who had wavered in their allegiance, accepted that resolution as an apology for the appointment of which they so loudly complained, and prepared to follow the imperial standards. The requisite number of troops having been organised within three months, the emperor's tents were sent on beforehand ; and the astrologers having been consulted as to the time when he should set out from Agra, an hour was discovered at the termination of the third day of the new moon, which they unanimously pronounced auspicious for that purpose.

The whole army having been assembled in and around the city, the great imperial drum, accompanied by the trumpets and cymbals of the palace and the artillery of the citadel, gave the signal for departure, and at the precise

moment indicated by the stars, the whole host was in motion on the road to Delhi. The vanguard was composed of thirty thousand cavalry, mounted on steeds from Turkestan and Tartary, clad in chain armour, and bearing in their hands long spears. These were followed by three thousand elephants, with castles on their backs, occupied by the household guards, who bore matchlocks in their hands, and on their breasts cuirasses of burnished steel. Mantles of scarlet cloth covered those parts of the elephants' hides which were not painted black, and from their ears were suspended white tails of the cows of Great Thibet. Their guides sat upon their necks, arrayed in iron armour from head to foot. Next to these elephants were stationed ten thousand archers, clothed in green quilted mail, armed with large bows, and quivers filled with winged arrows, and with slings for the discharge of various missiles. Then marched forward five hundred dromedaries, and small swift-footed elephants, upon whose backs were fixed, on swivels, pieces of light artillery, each attended by a gunner, who held before him a shield of steel; Bengal buffaloes drawing a hundred pieces of heavy

artillery, and vast masses of Hindoo infantry, followed at some distance by the imperial staff, composed of omrahs and rajahs, some riding on elephants, others mounted on war-horses clothed in armour, all distinguished by their golden helmets, surmounted by black horse-tails and Begla plumes, cuirasses of silver, and gold-hafted scymitars of Damascus, whose naked blades outshone the sun.

The omrahs were attended by cavaliers and footmen, bearing silver maces; and the rajahs lifted the banners of the empire, surmounted by the crescent; behind which, followed, intermixed with a thousand flutes, trumpets, cymbals, drums, and tambourines, the sacred kour consisting of long ebony staffs, on the tops of which glittered in massive silver the mystical hands; spheres representing the sun, moon, earth, and stars; birds and quadrupeds of awful forms; the scales of justice; the head of Solomon; tablets inscribed with characters which the prophet alone could interpret; and other symbols of sovereign authority. High above all these veteran warriors, and this splendid pageantry, appeared, reclining on a throne of solid gold, shaded by curtains of cloth of gold,

and a canopy of silver thickly set with diamonds, emeralds, and rubies, the great chieftain of the host wearing his magnificent Persian tiara and imperial robes, mounted on Indragui, that elephant of matchless stature, towering in the air like a giant of ancient days. To ascend this stupendous animal, required a ladder of fourteen steps. His body was painted all over with the dust of yellow sandal-wood. From his ears hung snow-white tails of cows from Thibet; his neck, breast, and legs were covered with chain armour of gold, interspersed by plates of the same metal set with opal stones of incomparable lustre, from which rows of melodious silver bells were suspended.

Indragui, notwithstanding his size and strength, was of a disposition so gentle, that under his most fearful excitements, if an infant happened to fall in his way, he would take it up with his trunk, and place it out of danger with the utmost tenderness. Such was his courage, that he would not hesitate to attack a hundred elephants in the field of battle, or in the arena where combats of animals were performed for the entertainment of the court. In speed he excelled the fleetest horse ever seen in Hindos-

tan. A band of music and a company of forty spearmen were assigned to attend exclusively upon this elephant, such was the regard in which he was held by his imperial master.

Bochari, in silver armour, his gold helmet covered with waving ostrich plumes, was seated on a cushion at the emperor's feet; and then followed on horseback a troop of eunuchs, each with a gold-headed cane in his hand, attending twelve of the principal ladies of the harem, mounted on Pegu elephants, seated in litters, and protected from the gaze of the multitude by golden lattices and canopies of brocade, over which were thrown nets of azure silk, with deep fringes of silver. Surrounding these elephants, were trains of female slaves from Tartary, fantastically attired, and riding zebras and milk-white ponies from Cashmere.

Saddle-horses fully caparisoned, mostly of a light fawn colour, led by pages in the red imperial livery; footmen bearing on their shoulders, battle-axes, and javelins; pipe and hookah bearers; huntsmen leading in couples beagles, leopards, and large birds of prey trained to the chase; falconers with hoops suspended around them, on which were perched hawks of twelve

different kinds, including the beautiful zodeh-peer, no larger than a parrot, and the mool-cheen, scarcely so big as a sparrow,—both perfectly green, which, like the royal hawk, attack and bring down game of any size; gladiators, and the keepers of the wild beasts, holding in strong chains lions, tigers, wolves, rhinoceroses, lynxes, hyenas, and panthers; monkeys riding on troops of well-trained dogs, and bears taught to dance to the sound of drum and fife, followed the imperial harem, guarded by the executioners of the palace, mounted on dromedaries, clad in black mogul caps and pelisses of leopard skins, bearing on their shoulders axes of the finest edge, whose glittering blades struck all beholders with terror.

Last of all appeared a vast disorderly multitude, composed of camels, buffaloes, horses, mules, oxen laden with tents, provisions, cooking-utensils; of suttlers of the army; vendors of articles of every description, to whom the removal of the court would have been ruinous if they had remained at Agra; of Brahmins, Hindoo devotees carrying their idols, dervishes, barbers, tailors, astrologers, jugglers, exhibitors of shows and serpents, harpers, lutanists, players

on the dulcimer, singing and dancing girls, adventurers of every colour, and idlers and thieves of every age and sex, whose undulating masses were seen, and whose shouts were heard in the back ground of the army, like the waves and sounds of the untameable ocean.

Kazim Ayas, to whom, as the high chancellor, the emperor had delegated his authority over the capital during his absence, ascended the watch-tower of the citadel an hour before day-break, to observe the movements of this mighty host. The early sunbeams, piercing through the foliage of the trees, and reflected by a vast forest of spears, soon enabled him to discern the position of the vanguard. The glittering cuirasses of the household troops easily distinguished them from the dark array of the archers; and the shields of the gunners indicated the progress of the light and heavy artillery. The Hindoo infantry, in massive columns, ten men a-breast, were clearly seen, armed with short pikes and cutlasses, and moving to the martial airs of their different bands. The silver canopy of the emperor seemed in itself a sun surrounded by a sea of plumes, through which countless helmets shone

like satellites. The multitude that followed was occasionally hidden from Kazim's eye by clouds of dust, which assumed hues of gold and purple as the sun rose higher in the heavens. Their tumultuous shouts at first filled his mind with apprehensions of a general mutiny; but his fears were dissipated by the regularly recurring clash of cymbals, and the roll of drums, and the tramping of men, elephants, and horses, mingled with gay music, borne to his ear at intervals on the light winds that played through the firmament.

Chusero's emissaries conveyed to him early intelligence of the advance of the imperial army. He prepared to give them battle on the borders of the river Sutledge, the passages of which he resolved to defend; if defeated there, he intended to retire within the fortifications of Lahore, and if driven thence to seek refuge amongst the mountains of Cashmere. He was not ignorant of his father's passion for Nourmahal, and he carefully availed himself of the circumstance, in order to gain over to his cause the powerful assistance of Shere-Afkun. The feelings of that distinguished warrior were painfully alive to the insinuations which had

been circulated upon that subject, both before and after his marriage. It was not difficult to excite his attention to the consequences that might arise, if Jehangire should enter Cashmere, flushed with the victories which must have crowned his banners, should he march beyond the province of Lahore. Afkun was, moreover, too much of a soldier to hear of battles and warlike movements in Hindostan, in which he did not participate. He had already quelled the insurrectionary spirit of his own province; and although the luxury of domestic enjoyments never before possessed for him such attractions as it yielded at that moment, still he felt it impossible for a chieftain of his rank and celebrity, to remain neutral in a contest on which the fate of the empire depended. In answer to the requisitions for assistance, addressed to him by Chusero, he engaged to bring into the field twenty thousand fighting men, being fully persuaded, from all he had heard of Jehangire, that from idiocy or madness derived from his maternal blood, and aggravated by the vices of wine-drinking and opium-eating, in which he was reported to have indulged beyond all the ordinary bounds of

decency, the new sovereign was incapacitated for the functions entrusted to him by the weak partialities of Acbar.

Nourmahal, notwithstanding the conflicting feelings by which her bosom was agitated, suggested no opposition to the resolutions of her consort. The castle in which they resided, at a short distance from the city of Cashmere, was the resort of crowds of young noblemen, who, from the moment they heard that Chusero was proclaimed emperor at Lahore, and that Afkun determined to espouse his cause, were anxious to enlist under his banners. The frank and manly character of the prince, his freedom from those vices by which the character of Jehangire was tainted, the cordiality of his manners, the heroic beauty of his person, his unquestioned bravery, were rendered familiar to them by the reports which they had heard on all sides. There was, moreover, something especially odious to their proud minds, in the notoriety of the influence which the son of the Persian portrait-painter exercised over Jehangire, and they agreed that, at all events, it became the chivalry of Hindostan to rescue the

throne from the thralldom of such a vile adventurer as Bochari.

Their conversations upon this subject were conveyed from time to time to Nourmahal by Afkun; sometimes she overheard them from her terrace, as the young omrahs were carousing in the great hall of the castle. She listened with anticipations of unfeigned pleasure to every proposition which had for its object the destruction of Bochari's power, remembering, as she did, the scowling looks with which he pursued her on the evening of the Vishnu dance, and feeling instinctively that his ascendancy stood before her own destinies as an impassable barrier. She therefore speedily caught the contagion of enthusiasm with which the approaching battles were spoken of by all around her, not doubting that they would yield fresh laurels to him whose renown had already won her hand. How far it had yet touched her heart, was a problem which even Kanun found a difficulty in solving.

CHAPTER II.

On that day thy cheek sparkled under thy veil, and all this beautiful imagery appeared on the mirror of our fancies.

HAFIZ.

“It grieves me,” said the pale Circassian to one of her companions, while they were engaged in watering a bed of Cashmere roses, “to behold the indifference with which our mistress still meets the looks, beaming all over with love, that light the noble countenance of the subah, whenever he finds her walking alone on this terrace. He takes her hand in his, kisses it, gazes upon her eyes with ardour as warm as if she had just dropped down to him from heaven; but she—has finished her walk, or is weary of the heat, or, negligent of his attentions, turns away to a tulip or an anemone, about which she

seems to care much more than any thing that he can address to her !”

“ It is but too true ! How changed, Kanun, she appears from her former self ! You remember the night of the Vishnu dance,—when Selim, now the emperor, was present,—what a goddess she looked on that night !”

“ Ah, never can I forget it. You know how beautiful we always thought her,—but she was then divine ! How changed indeed ! She will sit for hours at the foot of a water-fall, which tumbles from those lofty mountains above us with a roar that is to me sometimes terrible. But Nourmahal likes it. It hushes to repose, she says, the feelings that trouble her bosom when she thinks of her delicious home upon the banks of the Jumna !”

“ Why does she still call her father’s palace, which she has quitted for ever, her home ?”

“ If that palace had not been in Agra, had she not remembered that from its towers and gardens she could behold the golden domes of the seraglio, those domes upon which she gazed with so many tears when we left the capital for Cashmere, think you that her heart would still

yearn for that home, when she possesses such a princely residence as this?"

"I understand you too well."

"Look, what a prospect of marvellous beauty those lines of houses at Cashmere exhibit, their flat roofs planted according to the beauteous fashion of this enchanting country, with flowering shrubs, geraniums, campanulas, and roses of every colour under heaven! Standing thus in the valley beneath us, with that ample lake like a sheet of burnished gold around them, in which they appear again as if imitated by some magician of the skies, do they not justify the tradition that here the true paradise was planted in the elder days? Oh is it not rapture to breathe the perfume which they send us upon the wings of the evening breeze, when the fire-flies are sparkling all over them like some lost stars that know not where to be at rest? It was but yesterday evening that I asked our lady to sketch for us, with her matchless pencil, that bewitching scene; but she held in her hand a faded, withered lily of the valley, which she seemed to think more attractive than the whole collection of living charms I had pointed out to her attention."

“There she now moves yonder, towards those cedars, more like a queen than the daughter of a shepherdess.”

“Ah! I see she is going to her favourite haunt. When wandering alone in that dark grove she feels that she is shut out from all the world; that she can read, or write, or sketch, or give herself up to those long reveries,—those tears,—which she has of late exchanged for the buoyant spirits she had always known on the banks of the Jumna. She loves to listen to those ancient trees waving solemnly above her head, as if they were communing with each other in their plaintive voices about the remembered happiness of other days. The Galun, fed by a thousand streams that descend from the mountains, do you not hear how it contributes its sweet murmurs to the music of the grove, while that unceasing cataract, now deepened to thunder by a rush of waters which had been blown back for a while by opposing winds on the mountain’s top, now modulated to the song of the bulbul, forms the bass for a concert of which her ear never tires.”

Nourmahal was, indeed, much attached to the cedar grove from the earliest moment of her

residence in Cashmere. She loved to escape thither, especially at noon, from the train of her attendants, and from the importunities of the other ladies of the subah's harem, who entreated her to teach them those arts of embroidery, painting, music, and dancing, in which she had attained, almost without exertion, unrivalled excellence. She willingly abandoned to them the opportunities which those hours afforded, for winning the attentions and courting the smiles of him whose slaves they were, while she wandered alone through the cedar grove, or sometimes, accompanied by Kanun, if the cooler temperature of the season permitted, extended her excursions to a rising ground whence she could catch favourable views of the scenery around the castle. Her taste for drawing had furnished her with a solace that never lost its zest, even when thoughts of the past, anticipations of the future, pressed upon her with a weight that to other minds would have been all but intolerable.

It was a landscape worthy of her happiest skill—one upon which, notwithstanding Kanun's remark to the contrary, she had often pondered with delight, so different did it appear from any

scene she had ever known in Hindostan. The capital lay beneath her, at the distance of three leagues, in a valley, through which flowed the Galun, a wide, full, yet placid river, ever bearing to an extensive lake beyond the town, the contributions of innumerable streams that rushed down from the surrounding mountains. The lower circle of those mountains, broken only at one point, where the surplus waters of the lake found an outlet, towards the Indus, between two stupendous rocks, exhibited a perpetual spring. It was interspersed by many villages and hamlets, by rice-fields, saffron-meadows, gardens, lemon and orange-groves, clusters of trees that yield the custard-apple, the guava, the mango, the tamarind, the citron, almond, peach, nectarine, apricot, pomegranate, fig, and mulberry. Upon the pastures sheep were browsing, attended by myriads of lambs, white as snow. The lowing of cows was occasionally heard from all parts of the declivities; while among the rocks that jutted out here and there, were seen troops of goats, whose hair furnished the materials for those splendid shawls that are held in such esteem by all nations.

Above the pastures and villages, Nourmahal's eye wandered among forests of mahogany, pine, and oak and juniper, mingled with the palm, the walnut, and the noble plane-tree, the saul, whose wreaths of foliage and flowers seemed all silver, the graceful festoons of the azure convolvulus, and the golden tassels of the laburnum. From branch to branch, those busy birds, the fly-catchers, pursued their delicate game, arrayed in deep glossy black, or in brilliant crimson, or in that beautiful verditer blue which gives out tints of green when touched by the light. Hundreds of humming-birds flitted about, looking for insects in the centre of expanded flowers, whose purple, or yellow, or roseate hues they seemed to borrow, as they chased each other through the woods. Here the peacock compensated for his dissonant screams, by the display of that wondrous assemblage of colours with which his long plumage is illumined, challenging all the other birds of Cashmere, and casting into the shade even its peculiar pheasant, whose wings are so resplendent with tints of burnished green and purple. The notes of the blue thrush, the blackbird, and the cuckoo ; the lively song of the skylark

and the blackcap; and the tender murmurs of the nightingale, came from different parts of the surrounding forests to add their charms to that enchanting valley.

The zone of forests with which the lower range of mountains was belted vanished, apparently, into the clouds; but, beyond them, Nourmahal discerned a still higher circle of ridges, covered with perpetual snow, whose summits were as bright and serene as the face of the summer moon, when all the world beneath was overshadowed by the tempest and shaken by the thunder. Sadi justly exclaimed, when he first beheld Cāshmere, that it was a triple diadem, composed of a band of emerald, and then of opal, reflecting every colour, and then of diamond, glowing like the star of morning.

The fountains that burst forth on all sides from those aërial heights, formed numerous cascades, as they sought their way, like veins of liquid silver, down the naked rocks and green declivities, until they mingled with the Galun, yielding, as they descended, a combination of melodies that lulled the soul into an Elysian sleep. The green or saffron soft car-

pets spread over the plains of the valley, animated by thousands of azure-winged butterflies, enamelled by the yellow anemone, the brilliant pink, the proud geranium, whole fields of roses, whose essence the Hindoo goddesses steal to perfume their golden hair, the dictamnus, whose petals are arranged like the strings of a lute, the mimosa, and those sun-like flowers that dazzle the eye, seemed the work of some magician, especially when the changing shadows of the mountain tops, or the passing clouds, now spread a mantle over the bosom of the valley, now left it rejoicing in the sunbeams, breathing the incense, and robed in the radiant garments of Paradise.

No bird or beast of prey, or poisonous reptile, disturbed the repose of that unrivalled scene. The eagle looked upon it with delight from his habitation amidst the snow-crowned rocks, but sought his food in Thibet, or among the Himalayan mountains. The tiger, scared by its resplendent beauty, turned back, when the antelope, of which he was in pursuit, fled for sanctuary to the woods of Cashmere.

Nourmahal might well have been excused, if she often out-stayed the sun, while endeavouring

to retain on her canvass the prospects which attracted her eye at every step, whether she gazed upon the works of nature, or upon the picturesque dwellings raised by man on the banks of the lake and the river, surmounted as those dwellings were by gardens carefully cultivated, and filled with violets, roses, narcissuses, and rose-scented tulips, vines, melons, and quinces, the yellow broom, the splendid rhododendron, and oleander, and with hives for bees, whose pleasing hum was heard through the stillness of noon as they wandered from flower to flower.

Often, in the evening, when the heat of the day was spent, and the haze of the air cleared away, leaving the sky a transparent blue, and the refreshing breeze came down from the higher ranges of the mountains, did she watch from the summit of her own tower in the castle, the crowds of gaily decorated boats with which the lake near the capital, and the beautiful Galun, were covered, some engaged in hawking and fishing, some in bearing to the islands in the lake parties bent on pleasure, some apparently abandoned to the gentle motions of the current, as if the persons within them yielded

their whole existence to delicious visions of tranquil joy that knows no care.

Beyond the great lake others presented themselves to her eye, whose surface was almost wholly veiled by the nelumbium, that gorgeous, poppy-like flower, whose seeds and stalks yield a grateful food to the peasant. Nor did the torch of the glow-worm fail to prolong the twilight, until the moon, rising in her majesty, flung her path of silver along the surface of the waters, deepened the azure vestment of the heavens, and hushed to repose the forests and all their winged inhabitants, the bulbul alone excepted, whose song is most musical, most bewitching, when every other sound is at rest.

There was a vacancy in Nourmahal's heart, which compelled her to seek occupation out of the ordinary routine of her duties. She could not, she did not, frequently attempt to conceal from herself, that she had been hurried by circumstances, over which she had no control, into her union with Afkun. She was sensible of his entire devotion to her—of the unquestionable preference with which he treated her beyond the other inmates of his harem—of the

liberty of action which he allowed her, and of the indefatigable affection with which he provided for her every sort of luxury and enjoyment which she could possibly desire. For his character she entertained the utmost respect—she esteemed him as the friend of her father—she adhered to him as her sworn protector through life. But in none of these sentiments, or feelings, did she discover those diviner impulses which spiritualise the heart, and enable it to identify itself with the thoughts, the griefs, the joys of another heart, as if the two were one.

The endeavour would have been useless, had she made it, to persuade herself that she was not an exile from scenes which she very much preferred even to the paradise around her. One circumstance alone might have reversed her convictions upon that point—a circumstance which she dared not prefigure to her fancy, during those moments when she was most alone. The victorious banner of the emperor—could she but behold it planted on the towers of the castle—Bochari overthrown from his pedestal of power—Chusero restored to filial obedience—Afkun at peace with his imperial

master, and in the enjoyment of his confidence—her beloved parents near her—and herself permitted now and then (it was all that she desired) to behold those glowing eyes which once looked up at her, and confessed her to be their mistress, alone, and without the chance of rivalry!—ah! these were indeed visions, which she could never expect to see realised.

Afkun could not but perceive that Nourmahal, in her new situation, was far from being happy. Fearless, however, as he was in all the other relations of his life, he had not the courage to open the page which would have disclosed to him the full measure of despair that would have filled his mind, had he known the real state of her feelings. He won from her, at times, one of those smiles of loveliness, which made her for the moment look like a being from some higher world. Upon that smile he lived for a season, deluding himself with the hope that it might return—return frequently, and at length prove that she was all his own. But it was the flash of the lightning. During long days, and weeks, and months, it returned not. It became unfamiliar to his eye, though never lost to his recollection. When the

thought occasionally came home to his heart, that he was thus to spend his life with the woman, whom, above all others, he loved—the woman, upon whose steps he waited, as if they bore the magnet of his existence—when he first began to apprehend that, with all his devotion, he had not succeeded in winning his way to that sacred tabernacle in her bosom, which was either pre-occupied, or reserved for some other object, he wept like an infant.

Nevertheless, he was of a disposition too noble to permit the slightest trace of his secret agony to be visible to any other person—especially to her who caused it. He resorted to no petty resources of revenge to assuage his mortified pride—he planned no schemes for exciting her to jealousy, though his harem yielded abundant means for operations of that description. His sense of honour taught him, that to all the females whom he had pledged himself to guard and respect, even when he could not love, he owed obligations of the most inviolable nature. They were happy in his presence, and grateful for the solicitude with which he uniformly provided for their health and convenience, and for those gratifications of per-

sonal ornament and dress, which engage so much of woman's attention. But although he might have easily induced any of them to aid him in experiments upon the princess Nourmahal, with a view to awaken her pride, and to affect her acknowledged rank as his principal consort, he disdained all courses of that kind, resolved, that if he could not gain her affections by the simple appeal of his own manly heart, and by the unchangeable tenor of his love, he would submit to the destiny that awaited him.

Afkun found even in time a solace in reflecting that he suffered for Nourmahal. It was a martyrdom known only to that intense love which survives even the hope of return. His constant meditation was, how he could best consult her wishes in all things, without seeming to press beyond the point which her feelings towards him could permit him to go. This generous delicacy would have conquered the indifference of any woman, in whose heart the affections lived alone unkindled by ambition. Nourmahal could not but be conscious of her power over Afkun, of his unbounded devotion to her, and of the tenderness with which he

treated her apathy. She confessed to herself the ingratitude with which she returned all his idolatry,—accused herself even of criminality, in not confining her hopes of happiness within the sphere in which she was now bound to move; but she could not, strive as she might, shut out from her view the brilliant prospects which had once, though only for a moment, shone upon her path; prospects, upon the recollection of which, however visionary, she would rather continue to live, than, by abandoning them, to get back that peace and innocence of mind which they had for ever dispelled.

CHAPTER III.

TWICE forty winters tip my beard with snow,
And age's chilling gusts around me blow.
In early youth, by contemplation led,
With high pursuits my flattered thoughts were fed ;
To nature first my labours were confined,
And all her charms were opened to my mind ;
Each flower that glistened in the morning dew,
And every shrub that in the forest grew :
From earth to heaven I cast my wondering eyes,
Saw suns unnumbered sparkle in the skies ;
Marked the just progress of each rolling sphere,
Described the seasons, and reformed the year.
At length sublimer studies I began,
And fixed my levelled telescope on man.

INDIAN TALE.

ABSORBED in those visionary secrets, which had now become the great charm of her existence, Nourmahal happened, during one of her excur-

sions among the mountains, to stray to some distance from her attendants. Mounted on a padded pony, that was accustomed to climb the hills, she left the rein loose upon his neck, permitting the animal sometimes to browse upon the herbage over which he wandered, sometimes to drink from the crystal springs which leaped down the mountain's side, full of that joy with which the whole scene appeared to be animated. It was one of those days in the advancing spring, when the valleys and hills and forests of Cashmere were arrayed in all the pride of their beauty, honouring the great festival which our planet holds every year, in thanksgiving to the Omnipotent for ordering his chamberlain, the zephyr, to spread the emerald carpet, and the clouds to foster the infant plants in the cradle of the earth.

“ Ah ! ” said Nourmahal to herself, as the fragrance of the thymy turf, pressed by her pony's feet, filled her soul with a rush of irresistible emotion, “ how true, how beautiful, are the words of the Gulistan :— ‘ He clotheth the bodies of the trees with verdant foliage, the festal garments of spring, and in celebration of the return of that season crowneth the youthful

branches with garlands of blossoms. By his power the juice of the cane is converted into delicious honey ; and by his discipline the kernel of the date becometh a lofty tree. Clouds and winds, the moon, the sun and the sky, are all busied, that thou, O man ! mayst obtain thy bread. *Eat it not in neglect.* For thy sake all these revolve and are obedient. It is not, therefore, consistent with the rules of justice that *thou only shouldst not obey.*'

“Wherefore rebels this heart of mine against its destiny ? Had I been a shepherdess, like that maiden, slumbering yonder beneath the shade of that willow, like her I should have been content to follow my flock wherever it chose to rove ; like her I should lie down when fatigued, repose in happiness, and awake to the renewal of that serene enjoyment, which is expressed in her composed and rosy countenance. What evil spirit is this that seems to have taken possession of all my faculties ? Honoured by the preference of the greatest warrior in Hindostan, placed at the head of his household, surrounded by all the luxuries which princely rank and opulence can bestow, why is it that my heart denies the interchange of other senti-

ments, flies away from all the real glowing loveliness spread here at my feet, to ponder upon far distant scenes,—scenes that I, perhaps, never may revisit?”

The grief that came over her soul while she thus yielded to despair, found relief in a shower of tears, which ran unheeded down her lovely cheeks. Her attendants, meanwhile, accustomed to her moods of abstraction, and not imagining that she was likely to wander beyond her usual rides, gave themselves up to all the gladness of the day. They had discovered a small lake, secluded amongst the hills, shaded from the sun by willows and palms, clear as the sky above their heads, its bed composed of fine sand, its surface so unruffled, that when they came in a group upon it, and looked into it, holding each other by the hand, they beheld themselves, and the trees and the hill-sides around perfectly pictured as in a mirror. Although they had already performed their ablutions in the harem, they could not resist the temptation to bathe again. Having thrown off their garments, and loosened the fillets by which their long hair was bound, they plunged into the cool fountain, where they sat down and amused

themselves with lifting the water in the hollows of their hands, and then permitting it to fall on the tops of their heads in refreshing streams. "The nightingales," as Sadi says, "were chanting around them from the pulpits of the trees." A zephyr gently waved the branches of the palms and willows by which they were shaded, the grasshoppers chirped on the hills, bees murmured among the yellow broom, and butterflies coursed each other from flower to flower, now expanding their ample wings, now closing them up as if afraid of exposing their delicate azure too much to the rays of the noon-day sun.

While the gay maidens were still revelling in the delicious coolness of the fountain, telling each other their dreams of the preceding night, Kanun called their attention to a sound which she thought she had heard. They unanimously proclaimed it to be one of her fancies, and went on with their talk; when she, again hushing them to silence, bade them listen in the direction to which she pointed out. They now perceived at some distance up the hill, almost hidden by plane and poplar-trees, an ancient temple of considerable extent, and near it a round tower so covered with ivy, that it looked to them like

a tall cypress. Presently the sound which before was faint, swelled louder on the air, and filling the atmosphere with an undulation of melody, passed away as one of the visions of which they had just been speaking. It was, however, after a short pause repeated; Kanun declared that they must be in one of those enchanted valleys with which Cashmere abounded. They listened with increasing wonder, and while they kept their eyes directed towards the temple, they beheld, emerging from the shade of the trees by which it was encircled, a line of female pilgrims, in the Hindoo attire, preceded by a girl clad in white, her head crowned with white roses, and bearing in her hand a silver wand wreathed with blossoms of the apple-tree.

The moment the procession began to move the music ceased. Each of the pilgrims held the fore-finger of the right hand to her lips, bearing in the left a bunch of various flowers, carefully arranged, and tied with the slender filaments of the vine. Descending slowly towards the lake, they seemed to experience no surprise on finding it already occupied by the bathers, who, hiding their limbs in their hair, watched with curiosity the progress of the reli-

gious ceremony. The pilgrims, standing round the lake, repeated, in a voice scarcely audible, a prayer that the flowers which they cast into the water might reach in safety the places for which they were destined—some of those places being, if Kanun rightly heard the names, as distant as Tatta on the Indus, as Benares on the Jumna, and as Patna on the Ganges. It seemed as if a shower of roses and hyacinths, of pansies and jonquils, and tulips, had fallen from the heavens upon the lake, many of them heaped upon the beautiful blushing faces and raven hair of the maidens, to their boundless delight.

The pilgrims having returned to the temple, in the same silent solemn order as that in which they had descended to the lake, Kanun, while she divested herself, with scrupulous diligence, of the fragrant burthen which was partly entangled in her hair, bade her companions to be careful to follow her example, as she was convinced, from what had occurred, that they must be in the celebrated fountain of Send-Brare. Being immediately called upon on all sides to explain the mysteries of this fountain, she said, that towards the middle of the spring, as she

had heard, the fountain flowed and ebbed at the dawn, at noon, and at night, for fifteen successive days, and then remained dry until the same period in the following year. Pilgrims flocked to the fountain annually, from all parts of Hindostan, for the purpose of purifying themselves in the sacred stream, and then of worshipping in the neighbouring temple. After their prayers and hymns were over they returned to the spring, and threw into it bouquets of flowers, so arranged as to express their names, as well as those of the persons for whom they were intended ; these flowers they prayed might be borne to their native rivers and streams, in order to assure their relatives and friends, who duly watched for the interesting messengers, of the tidings of their happy arrival at Send-Brare, and of their having consummated their devotions. The flowers were sure to disappear with the retiring waters, and to be conveyed through the interior of the earth, by the hands of genii, to the places for which they were designed, however remote those places might be from Cashmere.

While Kanun was explaining this matter to her companions, and answering the thousand

questions to which it gave rise, desiring them to be astonished at nothing in Cashmere, for that it was all sacred ground replete with wonders, neither she nor they perceived that the waters had been gaining rapidly upon them from the moment they entered the lake. They were already lifted beyond their depth, and one of them, in attempting to reach the bank, having cried out that she was drowning, the alarm became general. Those who were near the willow grasped the branches in their terror, rending the air with their screams and piteous shouts, which were echoed through the mountains.

Strange yelling sounds were immediately heard on all sides, as of many persons tortured with intolerable agonies; these noises, which were at first distant, seemed every moment to come nearer, until they burst over the heads of the affrighted sufferers, in a shout of horrid laughter that shook the earth to its centre. The waters were still rising, all traces of the flowery banks had disappeared, the pilgrims had come out from the temple and were running about distracted, not knowing what to do in their confusion. Some fortunately hastened to rescue the maidens from their perilous condi-

tion, many lay prostrate in fear, others knelt down to appease, by their prayers, the angry gods. The sky assumed a fiery redness, which was succeeded by the darkness of night, and a silence more awful even than the dreadful uproar that had just subsided.

A low murmur proceeded from the ravines of the mountains, followed by flashes of lightning and hurried peals of thunder, each louder than the former, scarcely distinguishable from the countless shouts by which they were re-echoed all round the lurid horizon. Hail, snow, rain, furiously precipitated from the clouds, were succeeded by a tempest of wind that bent the tops of the stoutest pines to the earth. The tower of the temple, struck by a thunder-bolt, was rent in two, and one of the lofty walls fell with a tremendous crash. The dome gave way before the storm, when an enormous globe of fire entered with a hissing sound, and exploding in the sacred building, left it a pile of ruins.

While the battle of the elements was thus raging, Nourmahal, borne rapidly towards the higher ranges of the mountains by the faithful animal on which she was seated, whose sagacity and experience taught it the means of safety on

such occasions, escaped from all the dangers of the scene. Above her, the sky was serene as an infant's smile; beneath, she beheld a sea of black clouds, agitated as if they had been scourged against each other by the lash of some fiend. The lightning was visible through them in zig-zag lines, and forked, as if wielded by the same implacable hand, for the destruction of all things that lived on earth. The clouds rose higher, every moment, with appalling sounds, that urged her companion to greater speed, until his steps were arrested by a voice, louder even than the thunder.

Nourmahal, turning round, beheld standing near her on an isolated rock, the figure of an aged man, his loins girded with a panther's hide, a goat-skin flung over his shoulder, a pointed woolly cap on his head, his white uncombed beard long and bushy, and in his hand a rude thorny staff, upon which he leant. Looking down on the warring elements below, he seemed not only to enjoy the spectacle with a savage delight, but to direct the conflict with the authority of a commander. He called to the hail, and the rain, and the lightnings, the rolling thunders, and the winds, by names such

as a charioteer uses when he urges his horses to their utmost prowess on the course, or in the field of battle. His voice resounded through the sky, as he bade the elements advance, or retreat, or suspend their fury; and when he issued his mandates and saw how well they were obeyed, he cheered his slaves with a roar of laughter awful as the trumpet of the destroying angel.

Pausing for a while, he gazed on Nourmahal, who was trembling through all her frame, and in accents, somewhat softened from their harsher sounds, he assured her that she was out of all danger, as she had no share in the causes that produced it. He then directed her to proceed onwards by a path which he pointed out, which led her to some distance, until it terminated at a splendid portal, the arch and pillars of which seemed to have been carved out of the living rock, and glittered in all the colours of the rainbow. She was met at the entrance by a female attendant, graceful as a sylph, who encouraged her by winning smiles to dismount from her palfrey, and to enter the hall, the sides and roofs of which were composed of porphyry and jasper. From the hall she was led through

long galleries to a spacious saloon, where she was conducted to a couch spread with Persian cloth of silver, through a group of virgins, who paid her the homage due only to a reigning sovereign.

Nourmahal summoned all the energies of her mind, to preserve her conviction that she was not the sport of some delusion of her fancy. Her apprehensions were soon set at rest upon this point, by the information which she received from her beautiful attendants, who expressed their astonishment that she had not before heard of the hermit Baba Zeinedeen, to whom was entrusted the guardianship of the three wells, whence spring the Jumna, the Indus, and the Ganges. To his power also, they added, it belonged to control the dreadful tempests which were always called forth among the mountains of that district by any noises in the open air, beyond the ordinary sounds of nature. The peasants, when crossing those mountains, never spoke above their breath; the pilgrims repairing to Send-Brare, never uttered a syllable out of the temple, so well were they aware of the fearful consequences. Not only winds and thunders arose, but fields of ice

were separated from the higher declivities of the mountains, and in their descent to the valleys involved whole villages in destruction. On those occasions Zeinedeen was obliged to issue from his tower, and to restrain the warring elements, otherwise the whole country of Cashmere, the paradise of the earth, would be converted into a scene of desolation. His anger was unbounded when thus disturbed from his usual pursuits; but when the calamities of the hour were over, he resumed, with fresh ardour, his sublime studies, and was accessible to all who wished to consult him.

Nourmahal's fortitude sensibly returned, while this cheering and interesting intelligence was conveyed to her by rosy lips, and amidst sunny smiles. They, moreover, assured her, that she was well known to Zeinedeen, who had often spoken of her. Iced lemonade, with confectionary of the most exquisite flavour, was then served on golden trays; and, by the time she had rested from her fatigue, Zeinedeen returned.

Taking Nourmahal by the hand, the hermit soothed the alarms with which his savage appearance filled her breast, notwithstanding all

she had heard of his benevolence. He informed her that the commotions, unfortunately excited by her own attendants, from their ignorance of the nature of the fountain in which they bathed, and of the results by which their loud cries would be followed, were happily terminated, and that, with the exception of the ruined tower and temple, no other mischief had occurred. Her attendants had been saved from their perils by the pilgrims, and had found shelter in a cavern to which one of his slaves should conduct her, as soon as she wished to return to them.

Nourmahal's terrors having been completely dissipated by the friendly language of the hermit, she prayed permission to revisit him, in order to receive instructions in the lofty walks of knowledge with which he was conversant, to explore the fountains of the great rivers, especially of her own beloved Jumna, and to behold the wonders over which he held dominion. The hermit readily acceded to her wishes, and attending her to her palfrey, which was in waiting at the portal, he led the animal with his own hand, through the more difficult passages of the mountain; then confiding her to the care of

an intelligent slave, whom he had sent forward for the purpose, he gave her his benediction, and watched her progress, until distance shut her out from his view.

Nourmahal's attendants were no less delighted than herself, with their having met again, after a separation so unexpected and so awful during its continuance. Afkun fortunately had spent the day in the capital, where he was much occupied in organizing his troops for the march to Lahore, having been summoned hither by urgent despatches from Chusero. The bustle of military preparations in which all the male inmates of the castle were involved, left them little time for attending to the adventures which Kanun and her companions had to relate upon their arrival. What, with rivetting of armour, whetting of sabres and spear points, polishing of shields and matchlocks, new stringing of bows, packing of quivers with arrows, and trying the mettle of horses destined for the field, it seemed as if nobody had a moment to spare to listen to Kanun. The cooks and servants of the kitchen were all taken up in providing the continual banquets which were kept up in the great hall of the castle, from

morning until late in the night, in consequence of the number of Omrahs, and Rajahs, and cavaliers, who crowded to the residence of the subah, to tender their services.

Resolving, as he had done from the beginning, to espouse the cause of the prince, it was highly gratifying to Afkun's mind, to find that cause so popular throughout Cashmere. The offers of assistance which he received from all sides were so numerous, that within a few weeks he was enabled to muster the whole force of twenty thousand fighting men, with which he had pledged himself to join Chuse-ro's army. The last letters from the prince informed him, that Jehangire, after remaining for a while at Delhi, had set out with the whole of his troops in the direction of Lahore, and that not a moment was to be lost in making preparations for the general battle, upon which the destinies of the empire depended.

As speedily as the different troops marched into the capital, from the surrounding districts, they were embodied under the command of experienced officers, and directed to proceed to Bember, where they were to wait until the whole contingent should be assembled. A strong

garrison was left in the capital of Cashmere. The castle of the subah being raised on an eminence, surrounded by a deep dyke filled with water, which could only be crossed by a drawbridge, and the rocks which formed its walls and the greater portion of its towers, being inaccessible to an invading force, was confided to the care of a small band of veterans, too old to take any part in the expedition.

Afkun deferred to the last moment the painful task of announcing to Nourmahal his departure for a war, from which it might not be his fate to return. His steed was already caparisoned in the court-yard ; the officers by whom he was to be attended, were mounted ; and his pages were waiting in the great hall, holding his scymitar and shield, when he presented himself to his idolized consort, clad in his chain armour, and plain helmet of steel without plumes. Taking both her hands in his, he looked into her eyes to find there some tokens of that deep passionate love, which could afford him one bright remembrance to dwell upon during his absence. But he could discern in those spheres of unbounded loveliness no impulses, beyond that interest which she un-

feignedly felt in his success as a warrior. Kissing her cheeks, while the big tear was gathering from his anguished heart, he hastened to the hall, and girding on his sword, and passing his left arm through the clasp of his shield, he went forth, reckless of a life that he felt to be of such little worth to Nourmahal.

CHAPTER IV.

“ Thou art the father of all things, animate and inanimate; thou art the sage instructor of the whole, worthy to be adored! There is none like unto thee; where then, in the three worlds, is there one above thee? Wherefore, I bow down; and, with my body prostrate upon the ground, crave thy mercy. Lord! worthy to be adored; for thou shouldst bear with me, even as a father with his son, a friend with his friend, a lover with his beloved. I am well pleased with having beheld things before never seen; yet my mind is overwhelmed with awful fear.”

BHAGVAT-GEETA.

THE discovery of Send-Brare, and of the marvellous agency which enabled it to disperse secret messages throughout all parts of Hindostan, were the never-ending topics of Kanun's admiration. She would have exposed her dress to be drenched a thousand times by the rain,

her soul to be appalled by a hundred storms, rather than not to have known the exact position of the sacred fountain. Often as she had heard of it, since her arrival in Cashmere, she never could succeed in getting any body to show her where it was, and all her regrets were now converged on one point, that there lived nobody in Hindostan to whom she could despatch one of those symbols of her affection. Haply a few days might make some difference in that respect. The march to Bember would be speedily effected. Ah! there was one to whom she looked as to a star—so far beyond her reach—so bright, so fascinating always to her adoring gaze, but to whom her feelings were unknown, who, even if he knew them, would never notice them—could she dare to take this mode of disclosing to him the secret of her life? The thought was rapture—it almost brightened into hope—that ray of gladness which still remains to us of the sun of Eden.

Nourmahal also felt no slight curiosity to behold the fountain of so much power, and, as the period of its operation was limited, she crossed the drawbridge the day after the de-

parture of Afkun, and, attended only by the Circassian, proceeded in the direction which she pointed out. When they arrived at the spot, so well remembered by Kanun, they found it perfectly dry; but the moment the sun attained its mid-day height, they perceived the sands gradually becoming moist—the whole of the bed of the lake was soon covered with water, which rose higher every moment. Pilgrims, who had performed their devotions in the ruined temple, but silently, as no part then remained of the roof of the building, crowded round the margin of the fountain as before, and cast into it their various bouquets of flowers.

Nourmahal stopped to see the waters retire, and she was surprised to observe, that, with the element disappeared, through fissures at the sides of the lake, all the bouquets of the devotees. Whatever were the thoughts by that circumstance excited in her bosom, she kept them to herself. Kanun watched the varying expression of her countenance, with an intense desire to know what was passing within the world of her mistress's mind; but she had not the temerity even to insinuate any question on

a subject, which, above all others, she knew to be sacred.

Kanun, however, when she perceived Nourmahal alone the same evening in her garden, culling a variety of flowers, from which she diligently separated every imperfect or fading leaf, and which she re-examined from time to time with a degree of anxious attention, that mantled her countenance in glowing blushes, felt scarcely at a loss to conjecture the purpose for which those letters of love's alphabet were put together. Nor were her suspicions diminished, on receiving orders from her mistress the same evening, to direct that her favourite palfrey should be in readiness an hour before sunrise the next day, when she purposed, as she said, to pay a visit to Baba Zeinedeen.

There being so many fountains, and caves, and temples, and groves, and hills, resorted to in Cashmere, by religious men and women from all parts of the earth, it was no unusual circumstance to meet there with females alone, or in groups, with or without attendants, at all hours of the night or day, proceeding in the different directions to which they were led by their vows. The purposes which they were en-

gaged in executing, invested them with a character of inviolability held in universal respect. No remark was, therefore, made by the guard or sentinels of the castle, when they opened the gate to the drawbridge for Nourmahal, just as the first streaks of morning were reddening the sky. Arrayed in a plain white muslin turban and veil, a pelisse of blue cloth, her under garments being of slightly figured straw-coloured silk, a Cashmere shawl carelessly thrown over her shoulders, and a bouquet of flowers held in her girdle, she passed through the gate on her padded palfrey, and reached Send-Brare in time to witness a repetition of the flowing and ebbing of the mysterious lake, after having duly performed the prescribed devotions amidst the ruins of the temple. While stooping over the fountain, just as it was beginning to diminish, her cincture, by some means, became loosened, and her bouquet falling into the water instantly disappeared. She would have given worlds to obtain it back again. Her mind had suffered during the night so much agitation, on account of that bouquet—the visions which haunted her during the few moments of slumber she had enjoyed, rendered her so irresolute,

that when the moment came for taking the decisive step of committing it to the mystic well, she determined at least to postpone a step, fraught with consequences which she scarcely knew whether she ought more to hope for or to apprehend.

The accident which occurred deprived her of all further control over the symbol she had prepared. She lingered on the margin of the lake until all its waters vanished, and then, hoping that she might still find some balm in the counsels of Zeinedeen to tranquillize the conflicting storms in her heart, where her duties were all upon one side, and her affections on the other, she remounted her palfrey and directed his steps up the mountain.

The little active animal, well accustomed to climb those rugged heights, rapidly conveyed her to the hermitage. She was forthwith conducted to Zeinedeen, whom she found in the uppermost chamber of a lofty tower, surrounded by piles of books, by globes representing the earth and starry heavens, circles on which the signs of the zodiac were figured, charts, and compasses, and steel mirrors, paintings of strange insects and birds, and statues of gods,

such as she had never seen before. The hermit received her with patriarchal kindness, and at once entered upon the subject which he knew to be nearest to her heart.

“ You are unhappy, my daughter,” he said, “ and it has not been difficult for me to divine the source from which your solicitude proceeds. I, who, as you know, have dominion over the elements, could not have once glanced over the page which your countenance discloses to my eyes, without reading in it the secret sorrow that, like a bird of ill omen, perpetually hovers over your mind, and mars all the delights your youth, and intelligence, and susceptibility, ought to strew along the path of your existence. Thus it always is—and will be with those who inhabit this globe. It is written in the stars which rule their destinies, that the moment one cherished object is attained, another is sought for as the true loadstone of felicity, to which tend all their desires. But that acquired, still new wants, real or imaginary, arise, the latter being, of all others, the most tyrannical in their exactions, the most indefinable in the duration and number of the miseries they inflict on mankind.

“ It is given to me to converse much with beings of a higher order, for there are gradations of intelligence, from the mite you discern in that sunbeam, to Him in whose presence that sun would be but as the darkness of night. From those admirable masters I have learned that happiness is a gift withdrawn from this planet, in consequence of the transgressions of those by whom it was first inhabited ; and that, nevertheless, the search after that lost treasure, which they never shall find again while here, is a penance which all the sons and daughters of Eve must perform to the last hour of time.

“ Give up, then, my child, the vain pursuit. Be assured, that if you were to-morrow to be placed in possession of the throne of Hindostan, the next day would find you meditating on some object, dearer to your hope than even the throne of the first empire in the world. Come with me, and I shall expose to your view a scene that will teach you, if, indeed, you can yet be taught by any experience to shun the precipices towards which ambition may urge you, how futile are the dreams of felicity fostered by mankind.”

Nourmahal never felt so humbled as in the

presence of this monitor, who, without asking her a question, or consulting a star, seemed to fathom, with unerring certainty, all the most hidden abysses of her soul—to whose lofty trains of meditation the thoughts that engrossed her attention seemed now so little in her own esteem.

Unlocking a door that was concealed behind a mirror, the hermit led his fair pupil by a secret staircase, to a cavern, beyond which further progress appeared to be intercepted by a wall of porphyry. Zeinedeen struck the wall with his staff, calling out at the same time, in his awful voice, the name of Chunder. The name was repeated by a thousand echoes through the hollows of the mountain, and before the lapse of many minutes Nourmahal heard chains let down, and enormous bolts drawn back, when the mural mass, separating from the roof of the cavern, was lowered with a creaking noise, until it became level with the floor. A black, swarthy figure, with shaggy hair, and bent almost to the earth by the weight of years, stood at the other side of this draw-bridge, holding a lighted branch of pine-wood; by the flame, Nourmahal perceived that the

bridge spanned a torrent, through which rolled an immense body of water.

“Here,” said the hermit to his trembling companion, as he led her over the bridge, “you behold the first gush of the Indus ; no man has ever yet plumbed the depths from which those waters ascend. Proceed, Chunder, to the halls of the Ganges.”

Following the footsteps of their guide, Zeinedeen and Nourmahal walked on hand in hand, until they entered a gallery lined on each side with brazen figures of serpents. They then passed through a chamber, in which gigantic marble statues of the Hindoo gods were arranged, one hand of each pressed on the lips, the other pointing towards a spacious vestibule, where the light of the flambeau was no longer necessary, so resplendent was the arch of many colours, through which fell from the heavens, curled by no wind, stained by no foam, a vast sheet of water into an abyss in the bosom of the earth, whence no sound returned. The silence with which the stupendous element descended from on high, struck Nourmahal as more appalling than any thunder that had ever reached her ear. It was the fountain of the Ganges.

Chunder next led the way through a dark and horrid labyrinth, which opened upon an ample circular space, thickly spread on all sides with cinders and lava. The blue sky was visible at a great height above the tops of the surrounding mountains, while, at a short distance beneath the spot on which they stood, appeared a glassy lake. A boat, with oars in it, was hauled up on the declivity. Chunder immediately launched the little bark, into which Zeinedeen conducted his wondering companion, who scarcely hoped that she could retain her senses amidst the marvels she was permitted to witness.

When the boat was in the middle of the lake, Chunder drew in his oars, and Zeinedeen, after waiting till the circles caused on the surface of the water by the motion of the vessel had disappeared, desired Nourmahal to look down into the bosom of the calm mirror. Instead of the reflection of the gloomy scene around, which she expected to see, she beheld, as if in another world beneath her, numerous temples and towers; palaces and houses of every order; market-places filled with people and commodities of every description; bazaars and

shops; streets and squares lined with shady trees; suburbs decorated with gardens in the highest state of cultivation; green hills, and vallies, and forests; rivers gleaming through them, on which were numerous boats piled with fruits, and vegetables, and flowers; and on the roads leading to the different gates of the city, and in the streets, crowds of elephants, and camels, and buffaloes, engaged in the conveyance of passengers and burthens, and all things indicating the presence of a great and luxurious capital.

“Need we do more than gaze upon this perishable monument of the vengeance of the Supreme Being, to be convinced of the emptiness of all human hopes and calculations?” said the hermit. “Behold, there are crowds of every age and sex, whom the morning sun found occupied in all the affairs of life. That building which you see crowning the citadel, is the palace of Damuder, famed for the immense treasures of gold, silver, and precious stones, which he accumulated during his reign; and for the exquisite loveliness of the sultanas, with whom his harem was filled from all quarters of the globe. He had many valiant sons, had

conquered all the foes who attempted to disturb his peaceful reign, and in those fields and vineyards surrounding the capital, you may perceive his disbanded soldiers turning their spears into ploughshares, their scymitars into pruning-hooks, and their once formidable clubs into the staffs of shepherds. Men who had grown grey in battles, you may see on the hill-sides tending their flocks, or sleeping beneath the shade of their own fig-trees.

“The senate-house, a sumptuous pile of building, long frequented by orators and crowds of citizens, who hastened hither to consult for the safety of the state, or to regulate, by wise laws, the interests of the community, seems without a being in it; to such a state of order and peace had they arrived, that no further precautions were necessary in the way of legislation. Abundance prevailed every where. Orange and lemon groves teemed with their cooling fruits. Luxuries which the neighbourhood of the capital did not supply, were borne hither from all parts of Asia; spices are passing hither from Arabia; fine cloths and silks from Persia; diamonds, and emeralds, and rubies from Golconda; muslins and chintzes from Masulipatam;

rice, and timber, and wheat from Bengal; and fine wool from Thibet.

“ Behold the lakes and islands filled with families occupied only in pursuit of pleasure. Musical instruments are in the hands of thousands of players, surrounded by groups of dancers and singers, from whose upraised looks and joyous countenances you may easily fancy you hear the bursts of laughter that come from hearts inexperienced in care. The public arena is thronged in every part with spectators, assembled to witness the combats of elephants and lions, and of those terrible bulls who make the forests of Cabul tremble with their roar. But the temples raised in the elder days are all abandoned. So secure had the sultan become of the permanence of the felicity which he enjoyed, that he ceased to put up prayers to the gods, and the people were taught to worship Damuder alone, as if he were the fountain of all the blessings they enjoyed.

“ Look on that lofty golden throne, shining with precious stones of every hue, on which the sultan is seated, in the midst of a large plain, densely crowded with his vassals kneeling before him, and holding silver censers still

full of frankincense, which were prepared for a general act of adoration he had ordered. He had proclaimed a great festival to be celebrated on his birth-day. A thousand oxen were led, decorated in flowers and ribands, to that altar, where you may still count them. Near them are the priests of the new religion, which the sultan had ordained to be instituted in his own honour; and elevated on a lofty stage are a hundred musicians, with silver trumpets raised to their mouths. Upon the first signal from those trumpets being sounded, the sacrificers were to slay the oxen, the priests were to lift their hands to the throne, and the worshippers were to hold in the same direction their censers kindled at the moment, in order that the cloud of their fragrant offering, and the hymns of the priests, and the blood of the victims might in unison complete the triumph of the new faith.

“ But, awful to relate, the first blast of those silver trumpets was answered by a voice of scorn from the skies, that shook the earth in its orbit. That capital then occupied a magnificent valley, called the Garden of Cashmere, above the place where we now stand. The sultan,

arrayed in more than the glory of Solomon, was at the instant paralysed on his throne. The censers repelled the fires that were applied to them ; the uplifted arms of the priests remained suspended in the air ; the knives vanished from the clenched hands of the sacrificers ; the womb of these mountains opened, and amidst lightnings and thunders, such as from the creation of the world were never seen or heard before, the whole kingdom was precipitated into the abyss where you now behold it ; every thing living that it contained, struck dead by the sword of the archangel.

“ For the instruction of yet distant generations, a sheet of crystal was spread over this valley, whose declivities still retain frightful traces of the convulsion, by which that occurrence was signalized. The lake that covers the crystal is the fountain-head of your favourite Jumna. When you behold that river again, forget not the terrible example of punishment, visited upon human insolence and folly, which you have witnessed at its source. I know not if it shall deter you from the ways of ambition. The appetite for power, when once excited, is

insatiable as the ensanguined jaws of the tiger !

“ Hindostan ! Hindostan ! when shalt thou be at rest ? Even now the son is armed against the father,—the father against the son, and troops are marching from all parts of the empire to contend for a throne, just as certain to perish, as that sepulchred beneath these waters !

“ Men, men !” repeated the hermit, rising and clasping his hands in emotion ; “ think you with Damuder, that there is no God ? Is there a whisper to be heard on earth which denies His existence ? Do you hear it on the plains, in the forest, among the mountains ? Comes it from ocean booming in the tempest ; from the conflicting clouds when they peal along the arches of eternal space ? The breath of such a voice, passing over Cashmere, would clothe it in widows’ mourning, blighting the golden harvest, bereaving the rose of its fragrance, the lily of its raiment, the vine of its fruit, the woodland of its shade, and all that fair scenery diversified by hill and vale of its beauty and enchantment. The heart of man—would it not be palsied with horror—his brain fired with madness, if he were assured by such an

unearthly mutter that there is *no* Omnipotent ? What would he have to live for—what to hope, if he be indeed the sport of a delusion—the fool of the universe ? Why was he born in helplessness, condemned to labour in sorrow, endowed with desire of offspring who could but renew his misery ? Why feels he pleasure in virtue, loathing in vice, if there be no parent to cherish him hereafter, no judge to distinguish between innocence and crime ? No ; there is no such voice on earth, or in space ; or, if there be, it is a LIE, which the very outcasts from heaven would not dare to repeat ; for even they believe and tremble, thoughtful of the arm that hurled them from those regions of light which they shall never see again !”

Nourmahal had no disposition to interrupt the silence that followed these words of the hermit, who leading her back by the way they came, and resigning her to the care of an attendant, resumed the studies in which he had been engaged upon her arrival. On her way down the mountain she was met by Kanun, who had been anxiously looking out for her mistress, and they both returned to the castle together.

CHAPTER V.

Konchanamala. Glory to your grace ! The queen sends you word that Samvarana Siddha, the magician, is arrived from Ougein ; will your majesty be pleased to see him ?

Vatsa. By all means ; I take much pleasure in this cunning ; bring him hither.

Kan. Here is the king.

Sam. What are your majesty's commands ? Would you see the moon brought down upon earth—a mountain in mid air—a fire in the ocean, or night at noon ? I will produce them—Command.

HINDOO DRAMA.

To the proclamations which he had distributed amongst the chieftains of the northern and western provinces of the empire, Chusero received so many favourable answers, that by the time the adverse troops marched from Delhi, he found himself at the head of a formidable

army. He proceeded from Lahore to meet them, and encamped a few leagues to the south-east of that city, where he waited for the auxiliaries from Cashmere.

The difficulty of procuring provisions for his army, in a country already ravaged by the insurgents, compelled Jehangire to encamp in a plain near Shahabad, and there await the fresh supplies, for which he had issued orders to all the provinces still bearing him allegiance. The ground was peculiarly favourable for the display of that superb military spectacle, the halt of a grand army, within the neighbourhood of the field on which a general engagement is expected to take place. The principal quarter-master selected for the emperor's tents a rising ground, which was speedily prepared by the pioneers, and enclosed by high screens of strong cloth, lined on the inside with printed calico, representing gardens, and lakes, and vases of flowers, and other objects agreeable to the eye of taste. The screens thus raised, formed an ample square, and on the side on which the imperial entrance was formed, festoons of rich silk drapery embellished the external side of the temporary mural boundary.

Within this square the first tent erected was that called the Am-kas, from the hall in the capital in which the emperor, attended by his judges and nobles, gives public audience, and administers justice. The tent is devoted to the same purposes, and near it was raised another of scarcely less extent, to which the omrahs repaired every evening to pay their obeisance to the sovereign, and when necessary to consult with him upon the affairs of the empire. A lower boundary of screens, lined with chintz, and decorated with deep silken fringes, secluded the remainder of the square for the pavilions of the emperor and his seraglio. The outside of all these habitations was covered with coarse red cloth, ornamented with large variegated stripes, the roofs and walls inside being lined with white velvet or flowered satin, richly embroidered with gold and edged with fringes of azure silk. Cotton mats, three or four inches thick, were spread on the floor, and covered with Persian carpets, on which were disposed large cushions enveloped in the most splendid brocade. These tents were supported by pillars of massive gold.

On either side of the imperial gate, leading to

this square, were erected two long tents, where horses saddled and superbly caparisoned were kept in readiness for the emperor, whenever he chose to ride forth to the chase, or to review his troops. Before the tents several pieces of field artillery, and trumpeters on high stages were stationed, in order to salute the emperor as he passed through the gate. Here also tents were arranged for the omrahs on guard.

Within a short distance from the other three sides of the great square were the tents of the officers of the household, and those prepared to contain the arms and harnesses belonging to the emperor, the vests of brocade, and other materials given by him as presents upon state occasions, the fruit, sweet-meats, Ganges'-water, wines, saltpetre for cooling them, betel leaves, and other stores necessary for the use of his table, his choice elephants, and the various animals employed in hunting. The tents within and immediately without the great square constituted the imperial quarters, and beyond these were laid out, in long lines, the imperial bazaars, from which the emperor and his household were supplied with provisions, and all other articles of which they stood in need. These bazaars

were distinguished by extremely long poles, erected at a distance of three hundred paces from each other, bearing red standards, surmounted by the tails of Great Thibet cows.

Beyond the bazaars the great omrahs had their tents pitched, surrounded also by screens, and near them those of their officers and cavaliers. Then appeared the bazaars of the suttlers, who supplied forage for the horses of the army, and rice, corn, butter, and bread for the great body of the cavalry, artillery, and infantry. Each of these bazaars had also long poles at both ends, distinguished by peculiar standards floating high in air, in order that those which furnished the different supplies might be the more easily distinguished. The remainder of the ground was occupied by the tents of the inferior officers, the artillery, cavalry, and infantry, the civil officers, tradespeople, and the multitudinous followers of the army.

Three of the emissaries commissioned by Chusero to watch the movements of the hostile forces, met, on a cloudy night upon a hillock, from which they beheld, for the first time, stretching far and wide before them, the

imperial encampment. They saw numerous fires blazing in all directions, round which were collected groups of men employed in cooking. They recognised the entrance to the imperial quarters by the lantern which was suspended at the top of a very lofty pole, and which at a distance looked like a star. Approaching nearer, in order to penetrate as far as possible into the camp unperceived, they passed the outer lines of tents and bazaars, when their apprehensions were excited by seeing long rows of flambeaus suddenly kindled, amidst lanes of tents, from which the omrahs, followed by their attendants, hastened towards the imperial pavilion. They suspected that a council of war was about to be held, and anxious to divine the results, they concealed themselves from notice as well as they could, until the council broke up. The trumpets at the imperial gate sounded as the omrahs passed in, the shrill and oft-repeated notes incessantly echoing through the vast encampment, while the lines of light, and the countless fires, threw a lurid reflection on the dark clouds, portentous of the approaching scenes of slaughter. After an absence of two hours, the omrahs returned to their tents;

the flambeaus were extinguished, the cooking fires were permitted gradually to go out, and the emissaries, disappointed in their hope of meeting any one who could afford them the information they required, resolved to retire.

As they withdrew in different directions, they were obliged frequently to lie down on the grass, to avoid meeting with the watchmen who perambulated the quarters of the omrahs, and who cried out from time to time, "Kaber-dar, kaberdar" (have a care). Similar warnings were uttered in peremptory voices by soldiers sent in all directions by the grand provost, who visited the bazaars in search of thieves, and sounded trumpets at assigned stations to denote that all was well. It was not without difficulty that the spies made good their escape from these guards, and also from the sentinels posted round the whole camp, near guard-fires kindled at the distance of five hundred paces from each other.

Having re-assembled at the hillock where they met the previous night, the emissaries waited there until the dawn, when the sun rising, unveiled by a single cloud, presented to their view the whole encampment in all its magnitude and splendour. The red-striped pavilions

of the imperial quarters standing on an eminence, surrounded by their screens, looked peculiarly superb and imposing. The bazaars of the household, and many-coloured tents of the omrahs and their officers, the bazaars of the suttlers, the hosts of tents assigned to the great body of the army, stretching over the plain to the very edge of the horizon, the long poles surmounted by Thibet cow-tails, and by standards floating high over the encampment in all directions, exhibited a spectacle of authority and strength, and a combination of resources, which the emissaries began to apprehend their master was but ill prepared to encounter.

They therefore consulted amongst themselves as to the course they ought to take, whether to go back and represent the overwhelming numbers with which the prince would have to contend, or to penetrate the camp again, and observe whether any opportunities were presented by the habits of the emperor which would enable a resolute man to take away his life, and thus remove the only obstacle to Chusero's ascent to the throne. Could they accomplish that object, they doubted not that, besides the plunder which they might possibly be able to carry

away from the royal tents, during the confusion which such an event would create, they would receive, as their least reward, the principal provinces of the empire. They were not ignorant of Chusero's objection to the many propositions that were made to him for the assassination of his father. But the deed once consummated, and the throne opened to his acceptance, they could not persuade themselves that he would refuse it, and that, having the power, he would hesitate to bestow any compensation they could reasonably require for such an important service.

"Who doubts," said one of these debaters, "that the Orcha Rajaputs were employed by Bochari to cut off Abul Fazeel on his way to the Deccan? Who doubts, that whether this act was or was not suggested by Jehangire, it was sanctioned by him, since he has elevated Bochari to the first office in the state?"

"But the question now is," observed another, while he looked upon the splendour of the imperial quarters with the eye of the miser counting over his ingots of gold—"how any of us could find the means of getting near the person of the emperor, surrounded as he is by all those

tents, and bazaars, and screens, and lines of household guards. It seems to me that even if we had resolved upon the course you recommend, the accomplishment of it would be impossible."

"Not impossible," said the third emissary,—
"if the proper means be taken. You remember the Bengal Bauzigurs, whose tents we passed three days ago. Let us go back to them, and say that we have been sent to invite them to the imperial camp, where they may reckon on being well received, for the emperor never loses an opportunity of witnessing the performances of those wondrous magicians. We will, of course, accompany them, as if we formed part of their train, and shall then stand a good chance of being admitted to the imperial presence."

"An admirable suggestion!" exclaimed at once both his companions—"let us not lose a moment in carrying it into execution."

The emissaries returned, without delay, through the bye-paths of the country to the well, near which they had previously encountered the Bauzigurs; but not finding them there, they made inquiries amongst the shep-

herds, until they traced them to the high road towards Lahore. Having at length, by great exertion, overtaken the magicians, they stated that they were commissioned by the emperor, who had heard of their extraordinary feats, to conduct them to his camp, where they would be sure of receiving magnificent presents for the exhibition of their skill.

The Bauzigurs, of whom there were seven in all, too much delighted with this intelligence, and the invitation by which it was followed, to think of putting many questions to their new acquaintances, were easily prevailed upon to give up their intention of proceeding to the northern provinces, and directed their steps towards the camp, attended by the emissaries, who took care to make themselves useful as carriers of part of the equipage with which those wonder-workers are usually incumbered. Upon their arrival at the outskirts of the encampment they were challenged by the sentinels, who refused to allow them to pass without orders from the emperor. This difficulty had been foreseen and provided against by the emissaries, who produced a memorial signed by the Bauzigurs, setting forth some of the marvels

which they had it in their power to display, and praying his majesty's permission to appear before him. This memorial, which the emissaries represented to the Bauzigurs to be an affair of court form, indispensable even where an invitation had been previously given, was forwarded to the hands of Jehangire, who read it with puerile transport, happy to have the listlessness of the camp thus broken in upon for a day or two, and gave instant directions for the admission of the strangers.

Advancing through the tents and bazaars, amidst the gaze of the curious multitude, to whom they were obliged to promise a day's amusement upon their return from the imperial quarters, they entered the imperial gate, passed the screens, and preceded by a guard of eunuchs, approached the pavilion of the emperor. The report speedily went the round of the tents in which the ladies of the harem were lodged, that famous Bauzigurs from Bengal were arrived, and about to entertain the court. They forthwith prayed and obtained permission to witness the spectacle through latticed screens, which were speedily arranged for the purpose. A space was cleared for the exhibition, in front of

the imperial pavilion, and the magicians having announced that all things were prepared for their operations, the emperor came forth, attended by Bochari and a number of his principal officers and omrahs, whom the emissaries were well pleased to see unarmed. Immediately behind the divan, however, upon which Jehangire was seated, they observed a number of eunuchs, in close array, with drawn scimitars. A rustle of silks and brocades, accompanied by low busy whispers, intermingled now and then with gentle laughter, drew occasionally the attention of the younger omrahs to the lattices, through which many bright eyes were beheld, waiting, with intense eagerness, for the novelties of the day. The emissaries, who were actively engaged in assisting in the marvels about to be performed, now and then conveyed to each other, by their glances, an expression of rejoicing at the success which had so far crowned their scheme. But those glances had not altogether escaped the vigilant eye of Bochari, from whose mind suspicion never was absent.

The first performances were little beyond the usual arts of manual dexterity. One of the

Bauzigurs plunged a red rose into water, and brought it out a bright yellow. The next produced a bird-cage, which at first appeared to contain a pair of sweet-singing nightingales. The cage seemed to be without partition; but upon being turned around, the nightingales were changed into a couple of beautiful green parrots, and these vanishing were replaced by a brace of partridges, singularly mottled. They exhibited a large ewer, filled with water. Reversing it, they spilled the water to the last drop; but on turning the vessel, with its mouth upwards again, it appeared as full of water as before. They shewed a sack, open at both ends. At one end of this they introduced a melon, which at the other was brought out a cucumber; then the cucumber was converted into a bunch of grapes; and these into a branch of a tree, laden with apples of the true Abbas sort.

One of the seven stood up, and setting open his mouth, the head of a snake immediately came out of it. Another of the men seized the snake by the neck, and drew it out to the length of four cubits. This being cast to the ground, another and another followed, in the

same manner, to the number of ten, none of them being less than five cubits in length. These being all flung upon the ground, were immediately seen writhing in the folds of each other, and tearing one another with the greatest fury.

They arranged twelve porcelain jars, which every body who looked into them pronounced to be completely empty. The jars were then covered, and the covers being removed a few minutes after, they all appeared to be full, one of wheat, parched, and fit for use; another of sugar-candy; another of citron; another of tamarind, and so on; each jar containing a different eatable, which was tasted by the eunuchs. The jars were again covered, and so remained for a few moments, when, upon the covers being once more removed, the vessels appeared as empty and as clean on the inside as if they had been washed with spring-water.

One of the men displayed a ruby ring on his little finger; he removed the ring to another finger, when the gem became emerald, then to another finger, when the emerald became a diamond; then to another, when the diamond was transformed into a turquoise.

Jehangire expressed his astonishment at

these various changes. At the conclusion of each feat a buzz of admiration was heard throughout the whole courtly circle, and from behind the lattices expressions of wonder and delight became so audible, that it became necessary to intimate in that quarter the expediency of lowering their voices a little. Curiosity, however, was raised still higher, when the Bengalese announced that they had still in reserve matters better worth his majesty's attention.

They held up a book, the leaves of which they turned separately over before the whole court. Every body was convinced that the leaves, which were of the purest white paper, were perfectly blank, containing neither figures nor colours of any description. When the spectators were satisfied upon this point, one of the men took the volume in hand, and, opening the first page, shewed it a most elaborate vignette, sprinkled with gold upon a bright red ground. The second leaf appeared of a beautiful azure, sprinkled in the same manner, the margins being illuminated with numbers of men and women in various attitudes. On a third leaf were delineated herds of cattle, pursued

by lions and panthers, painted with such exquisite perfection, that they seemed almost to live on the page. The fourth was of a beautiful green ground, powdered with gold, on which was represented, in glowing colours, a garden, with numerous cypresses, rose-trees, and flowering shrubs in full bloom, and in the midst of the garden a sumptuous pavilion. The next change exhibited a leaf of orange, also powdered with gold, on which was pictured a battle. Two adverse hosts were seen engaged in deadly strife, led on by two kings, who fought hand to hand against each other, with a degree of frenzy that roused the enthusiasm of the young warriors to the highest pitch.

The seven Bengalese armed themselves with bows, and quivers full of steel-pointed arrows. One shot an arrow into the air, where it remained, at a considerable height, as if fixed in some solid substance. A second discharged an arrow at the first, to which it became attached; and so with every one of the remaining arrows, to the last of all, which, striking the united sheaf, the whole broke asunder, and fell in a shower upon the earth.

The principal Bauzigur, placing himself at

the emperor's feet, asked his majesty to mention the kind of trees which he would wish to see composing a shady grove before his pavilion. The emperor named the mango, the apple, the cypress, the fig, the walnut, the mulberry, and several other trees. The seven, immediately placing themselves in different parts of the open space, set seeds in the ground, and recited over each certain prayers in language unintelligible to any of the spectators. In a few moments plants were seen springing gradually up from each of the seeds, small and slender at first, like saplings, then rising higher, throwing out branches, the stems constantly acquiring greater thickness, the branches becoming stronger, with buds coming forth as in spring time, and then blossoms and leaves, and, finally, fruits, until a dense grove appeared, composed of all the fruit-trees which the emperor had named.

Jehangire could scarcely believe the evidence of his senses. Descending from his divan, he plucked mulberries, apples, and figs, with his own hand, and, tasting each, convinced himself that he was not deceived. While the emperor and different members of the court were roving

beneath the shades of the trees, and partaking of the fruits which were thus wonderfully placed within their reach, they were still more astonished to hear the notes of different birds. Looking up among the branches, they perceived them tenanted by crowds of yellow and black nightingales, thrushes, cuckoos, goldfinches, and mocking-birds, of such beauty, shape, colour, and melody, as they had never seen before. They poured forth their different songs, hopped from spray to spray, followed each other through the branches with playful indifference, and seemed, in all respects, as if they had been familiarised to the presence of their visitors. The fruits, after a while, gradually disappeared ; the leaves assumed the variegated tints of autumn ; the birds took their departure ; the branches became bare as in winter ; the cold blasts howled through them, they were covered with snow, and beautiful filagree work of hoar frost ; and then diminished rapidly in size, until they disappeared into the earth, from which they had been so miraculously made to spring.

This exhibition every body pronounced most extraordinary. They believed it to be the

work of no mortal hand. The emperor asked his learned men to account for it, but they acknowledged their inability to explain the power thus exercised, without attributing it to supernatural sources. The emissaries, in their astonishment, overlooked the purpose which they came to attempt, and fearing that persons of such skill as the Bauzigurs might divine it, and denounce them to the vengeance of the emperor, resolved, at all events, to postpone their design until the conclusion of the shows.

CHAPTER VI.

Though he take recreation in my absence, and smile on all around him, yet my soul remembers him;—him whose locks are decked with the plumes of peacocks resplendent with many coloured moons, and whose mantle gleams like a dark blue cloud, illumined with rainbows.

SONGS OF JAYADEVA.

THE next day the whole court assembled again to witness the performances of the Bengalese. They began by making an excavation in the earth, which they filled with water. They then spread a sheet over the pond, and after a short interval removed it, when the water appeared to be a complete mass of ice. To prove its solidity, one of the elephant keepers was directed to lead his elephants across the frozen element; the stupendous animals walked across it with as much ease and safety as if it

were a platform of solid rock. The sheet was thrown over the pond again, and when after a while it was withdrawn, no vestige remained either of the ice or the water, or even of moisture of any kind. Two tents were set up at the distance of a bow-shot from each other, the entrances being mutually opposite. The walls of these tents were lifted all round in order to shew that they were perfectly empty. Then fixing the tent walls in their proper position, one of the seven entered each tent, while their chief man, prostrating himself before the emperor, supplicated his majesty to name any birds or beasts between which he would choose to behold a contest. Jehangire called for two ostriches, as he had never seen any of those birds. Immediately two of those enormous birds ran forth from the tents, and opening their wings, attacked each other with fury ; the blood streamed from their heads and long necks, and the combat having continued for nearly an hour, without victory declaring on either side, the birds were separated, and conveyed within the tents. The greater part of the day was spent in similar contests between lions and panthers, wolves and tigers, and other animals, all of

which came out, as the emperor commanded, from the two tents, and yet when these were removed, no trace of any bird or quadruped could be discovered.

A chain of fifty cubits in length was next produced from a bag; one end of the chain was thrown towards the sky, where it remained as if fastened in the air. A fox was then brought forward, who ran rapidly up the chain until he reached its extremity, when he vanished. A wild boar followed, and disappeared in a similar manner. Next appeared a noble stag, panting as if pursued by hunters; stopping, he looked steadily around him, lifting his antlered forehead with that composed and graceful pride which seems to disdain even the shafts of fate. Presently the deep cry of a troop of beagles was heard in the distance, followed by the cheers of the hunters. The cry sounded nearer. The stag hastened up the chain, and was instantly followed by a hundred hounds and hunters. All dashed on into the sky, where the voices of the dogs and men were heard echoing far and wide, as if they had been in a neighbouring forest. For a while all was silent. A single bark was then heard,—again another, and

another; the huntsman's call to the dogs followed, and then came swelling on the air in a deep and soul-stirring concert, the full melody of the whole of the hounds, as if they had but one voice. The fox, the wild boar, and the stag were distinctly seen in the sky, returning towards the camp, pursued by the dogs and men through the firmament. It was a glorious spectacle. A shout of wonder burst from the whole army, who rushed from their tents to witness it. The fox was at length seized, and instantly torn in pieces and devoured. The same destiny awaited the boar. The dogs were closing rapidly on the stag. "The trumpets! The artillery!" exclaimed Jehangire. The signals were immediately given; and just as the exhausted and beauteous animal surrendered to his victors, a clash of cymbals, and a peal of trumpets and drums from all parts of the camp, followed by the thunder of the artillery, hailed the termination of the splendid chase. A dense black cloud, rising in the north, swept through the sky; and when it passed, neither hounds nor hunters were any longer to be seen.

The emperor immediately directed the bearer of his privy purse to present the Bengalese

with fifty thousand gold rupees. The emissaries, when they beheld the money bags delivered to the principal of the seven, grieved that they had as yet no opportunity for commencing their work of plunder. Their fears, however, of being betrayed, were far from being diminished by the wonders they had witnessed. They observed the lynx eye of Bochari frequently directed towards them. His pallid cheek and frowning brow told them, moreover, that something was passing in his mind which often took away his attention from the operations of the Bauzigurs. Feared he that they would unmask the murderer of Fazeel ?

Jehangire having directed the principal of the seven to attend him in the evening, retired within his pavilion. The court immediately followed his example, and the emissaries hearing the Bengalese say something of a nocturnal exhibition, which was to eclipse all their preceding performances, withdrew to the suttlers' bazaar, where, over some cups of arrack, they settled the course of their proceedings. When the chief of the Bengalese waited on the emperor, whom he found alone, his majesty questioned him much upon the means that were

used in order to produce the marvels which excited every body's astonishment. As to himself, he confessed that they were beyond his comprehension. The sage, bowing with great humility to the sovereign, entreated that he would issue his command for any sort of entertainment he might desire to witness, but, avoided answering the king's interrogatories, upon the plea that inviolable secrecy as to the sources of the power exercised by himself and his companions, was one of the essential conditions upon which they were granted. Jehangire then demanded whether it was within the magicians' art to predict the result of the approaching battle; to which the latter replied that he was altogether unskilled in astrology, and denied the faculty of looking into futurity.

The emperor, disappointed, rose from the divan upon which he was seated, drawing from his superb hookah the fragrant perfume of tobacco leaves of Shiraz. He walked up and down his tent for some time, much excited; at length, stopping before the Bengalese, who was standing in an attitude of profound obeisance, asked him whether he could exhibit before him his misguided son, Chusero, whose rebellion

had caused him so much trouble and anxiety of mind. The Bauzigur expressed a hope that he might be able to gratify his majesty upon this point. He then rejoined his companions, and speedily returned to the pavilion with a mirror, which he placed upright on the divan, against the wall of the pavilion, opposite the cushions occupied by Jehangire.

In the course of a few minutes the space behind the mirror appeared to be occupied by a large army, drawn up on the banks of a river, and beyond it, on a rising ground, Chusero was distinctly visible, surrounded by Man-Singh, Hussein, and a brilliant staff, to whom he was giving orders, while he held in his hand a chart, with strong red lines drawn upon it. Far in the distance was seen the subah of Cashmere, at the head of a numerous body of troops, marching towards the river under the standard adopted by the prince.

“It is indeed my son!” exclaimed Jehangire, with deep emotion. “Unhappy boy! Heaven be my witness, that if he were now to repent of his crime, and to sue at my feet for pardon, I would receive him with open arms! Chusero—my son—oh! who could have imagined this

when first I received you smiling from your mother's bosom? How have I watched over your infant years, with the warm gushing love known only to the heart of a parent! How have I waited, when fever or pain preyed upon your delicate frame, for the changes that indicated the departure of the disease! Oh, when those happy moments came—moments that appear to be but of yesterday—when your countenance became itself again, and your precious, blithe, and innocent looks, repaid us all for the sorrows we had suffered on your account—what joy we experienced! How the world, that was before all darkness, seemed to put on a new robe of triumph! But now—armed against your father—the father that still cherishes you in his heart of hearts—it is too much—agony beyond endurance!”

The Bauzigur, affected by this natural burst of parental tenderness, was about to remove the mirror, but the emperor, who perceived his purpose, beckoned to him to desist. Pressing his hand upon his forehead and eyes, from which tears copiously rolled, Jehangire sobbed aloud.

“And Afkun, too,” he resumed, when the

flood of his emotion subsided; "Afkun, the subah of Cashmere; the husband of Nourmahal—of *my Nourmahal*—turned traitor! The conduct of Hussein does not surprise me. Man-Singh's machinations are not new to me; but Afkun, why has he turned traitor against his lawful sovereign? Misguided men—mis-guiders of my son; whom, doubtless, ye desire to use as an instrument for the accomplishment of your own base designs, few are the hours that remain between this and the moment of my just vengeance. Bochari! Bochari! I say!"

The commander immediately made his appearance—surprized—not a little annoyed, upon seeing the emperor alone with the Bengalese.

"Bochari! issue orders through the camp to-night, to prepare for marching at the dawn. Afkun has joined the rebel standards, and if we delay here much longer, possibly other wavering chieftains may be induced to follow his example."

"I have learned as much by despatches which have just arrived. The rebel forces are drawn up on the farther bank of the Sutledge, resolved to resist our passage across that river.

Afkun has brought twenty thousand men into the field, instigated by his sultana, Nourmahal, of whose real designs I never entertained a doubt."

"By Nourmahal!" exclaimed the emperor, in a voice of amazement; "impossible. If I had ever any skill in reading the heart of woman, her soul is free from the guilt you would impute to it. Say, if you choose, that she aspires to be the empress of Hindostan; but with Jehangire at her side."

"An officer of the outposts humbly asks admission to your majesty," said one of the eunuchs in waiting.

"What is his business?" demanded Bochari, in a peremptory tone.

"He states that his message is one of importance, which he can communicate only to your majesty," said the eunuch, still standing before the emperor.

"Let him come in," said Jehangire. The officer having been admitted, and having made the usual obeisance, proceeded to relate, that as he was walking on the banks of a small river, near which the guard under his orders was stationed, outside the camp, his attention

was drawn to a bundle of flowers floating down the stream. It was stopped in its course by a cluster of rushes that grew in the river, and when he brought it out on the end of his spear, he perceived that it had been carefully tied by a golden band, and arranged, manifestly as a symbol, which, as he was unskilled in the language of flowers, he knew not how to interpret. Apprehending that it might be a mode of secret communication between the rebel leaders and disaffected persons in the camp, he deemed it his duty to lay it at the feet of his majesty, where he requested permission to present it, with his sincere, though lowly homage.

The emperor took the symbol into his hands, which he examined with intense anxiety. "It is! he exclaimed, his face radiant with exultation; it is a message from Nourmahal. See here, Bochari; *Nourmahal to Selim—her heart to its lord!* Said I not the truth? Oh! I knew it well. I needed no messenger to tell me that though I were abandoned by all the world, she would remain faithful to her first love. Divine invention, by which distance is thus annihilated between two beings, who are conscious of the thoughts of each other."

Pressing the flowers to his bosom, Jehangire examined them again and again, kissing them with passionate ardour.

“Take that officer’s name, and write him down a commander of two thousand.”

“What, sire!” inquired Bochari, “make a man commander of two thousand for bringing you a handful of flowers, picked up in a stream—thrown into it, no one knows where, or by whom. To a low pass, indeed, has fallen the service of the state, when its honours are to be dealt about in this manner!”

“Where they have been found, I know not,” remarked the Bengalese, in a tone intended only for the emperor’s ear; “but certain I am, that those roses could only have come from Cashmere. They are the true growth of that garden of the world, and cannot be found beyond it.”

“If so,” said Bochari, “who permitted nothing to escape him, “then Nourmahal must be nearer than we were aware of; there must be treason in the camp.”

The officer of the outposts was questioned, and desired to explain his discovery, without omitting the slightest circumstance. He could

only repeat what he had already stated, adding that he had heard, while formerly serving in Cashmere under Acbar, of a fountain that communicated, in some mysterious manner, with all the rivers in Hindostan; that it was dry during eleven months of the year, but that during the month of May it was filled and emptied three times within the twenty-four hours. He had never seen it, but the tradition was notorious.

“Wonderful!” exclaimed the emperor. “What think you of this tradition?” he asked, addressing himself to the Bengalese.

“The officer is well informed,” answered the sage; “your majesty will find it mentioned in the Ayeen Acberry.”

“It is false!” said Bochari, who turned pale and trembled all over; “it is the silly invention of some fools, or the machination of some knaves to impose upon the emperor.”

“I can only appeal to the work itself for the truth of what I say,” mildly replied the Bengalese.

“Desire one of my secretaries to bring hither the Ayeen Acberry,” said Jehangire, addressing the eunuch who answered to the call of his silver bell.

In a few minutes a secretary appeared, with the volume in his hand ; it was, by the emperor's command, delivered to the Bengalese, who, turning to the author's account of the subahship of Cashmere, read from it these words :—" In a long straight, in a mountain, there is a reservoir of water, seven ells square, which the Hindoos consider as a place of great sanctity. This reservoir is dry eleven months in the year ; but in the month of May, the water gushes out from two springs. First the water appears in an aperture, which they call Send-Brare, situated in one corner of the reservoir ; and when this is full, the water springs up in another corner, called Sureyshy, till at length the reservoir flows over ; after which it immediately begins to decrease, and continues doing so till it is perfectly dry ; and this flux and reflux happens every morning, noon, and evening. When the reservoir is full of water, people throw into it flowers for the different rivers, and, to the astonishment of the beholders, the flowers are afterwards found in the particular spring to which they were consigned."

" Let the officer be written down forthwith a commander of *three* thousand," said the em-

peror, delighted with this proof of the accuracy of his information. Bochari bowed to the mandate with his usual malevolent smile, jealous of any favours bestowed by Jehangire, which were not of his own suggestion, and directing the fortunate bearer of the flowers to follow him to his tent, quitted the imperial pavilion.

“I have read the same account of Send-Brare,” added the Bengalese, “in the Neelmut, the most ancient book we possess relating to Cashmere, and said to have been found at the bottom of the spring that gives birth to the Jumna. Beneath that spring, as the Ayeen Acberry also relates, is the celebrated city of the sultan Damuder.”

“Assuredly there is no empire in the world to be compared to this of mine for the wonders it contains, and for the great and wise men it has brought forth in every age. Future generations will scarcely credit the marvels which you and your associates have wrought in my presence. But I have given strict orders to my secretaries to preserve a faithful record of them, in order that I may not omit such unprecedented operations in the memoirs which I intend to compose of my life. There is one thing more I

would ask of you, if it should be within the dominion of your faculties. Nourmahal,—you must have heard of her matchless beauty, of that miracle of intelligence and grace that captivates all hearts,—does she accompany Afkun, or has she remained in Cashmere?”

The Bengalese again arranged his mirror, and, after a short interval spent by him in silent prayer and meditation, the instrument disclosed a castle raised on a rock, surrounded by natural fortifications, apparently impregnable, and by a deep wide fosse filled with running water. Within the walls were seen an extensive garden, teeming with flowers and fruits of every description, and a grove of cedars which appeared to wave gently in the breeze. Sentinels walked up and down the ramparts; the draw-bridge was chained up; domestics passed occasionally through the court-yard, in performance of their ordinary occupations; the towers of the castle rose, in fair proportions, one above another, most of them mantled in ivy, one being distinguished from the rest by the superior beauty of its windows of richly painted glass, on which the sun shone in the full splendour of its setting.

While Jehangire was gazing on this beauteous

scene, one of these windows looking to the garden and grove was thrown open, and at the casement appeared the figure of a lady, sitting on a couch, with a withered lily of the valley in her hand. Her countenance was almost as pale as the flower upon which she looked with intense solicitude, as if she were reading in its decayed leaves some story that held in thraldom all the feelings of her soul.

“There,—there they are! those eyes,—that light about her countenance never to be by me mistaken,—never forgotten! Nourmahal! O that you could hear my voice! Can she not? say, can she not speak to me?”

The sage shook his head.

“That lily of the valley, too!—Ah! I remember it. Her pallid cheek,—there is grief upon it. She is no longer the glowing, buoyant, smiling seraph she was at Agra,—but how infinitely more lovely! For me she suffers! O these welcome interpreters give me assurance that for me she still preserves her heart inviolate, though a terrible destiny has separated us for a season. I have erred. Too much of my youth has been spent in habits of gross indulgence. Twenty, thirty cups of the strongest wines in

one day I have often, for years together, thought but a moderate allowance. If I were but an hour without my usual beverage, my hands began to shake, I was unable to sit at rest. I have deserved punishment, and now it has come upon me. My best beloved son in open arms against his parent! Nourmahal,—whatever human laws may or shall say,—*my* Nourmahal,—the wife of another!”

Jehangire, tearing off his turban, flung it away from him, and throwing himself on the carpet, sobbed aloud, as if his heart would break.

“Crown, sceptre, treasures, all, I would be content to resign,—never to have possessed,—rather than have them upon these dreadful conditions! The peasant who wraps to his bosom the maiden of his first affection, and the infant of their mutual love, ah! how much happier is he than Jehangire! Why are those feelings planted in our bosoms? What is authority over millions of men to me, if at my heart I am to suffer these pangs of woe!—woe, which no tongue can tell, no medicine can assuage!”

The Bengalese, affected by this scene of imperial humiliation, felt that he ought no longer

to interrupt the sacred privacy of grief so overwhelming. Hoping that the entertainments which he had still in store for the night might afford the royal sufferer some relief, he quitted the pavilion with a soft step, and rejoined his companions.

CHAPTER VII.

Boy, let yon liquid ruby flow,
And bid thy pensive heart be glad.
Whate'er the frowning zealots say,
Tell them their Eden cannot show
A stream so clear as Rocnabad,
A bower so sweet as Mosellay.

HAFIZ.

WHEN the eunuchs in waiting went to announce to the emperor, at the usual hour after sunset, that the evening meal was ready, they found him still prostrate on the carpet, occasionally talking to himself in a low whispering voice, of his father, of Nourmahal, Chusero, Afkun, and Abul Fazeel, in an incoherent manner; to which, however, they had been long accustomed.

“ It was wrong—very wrong—that marriage.

My father ought never to have permitted it, knowing, as he must have known, my feelings towards her. And yet he was the most affectionate of parents—the most upright of rulers. He would not offend against the laws which, unhappily, gave her to Afkun. Fazeel favoured that marriage. He is gone—whither? His blood is upon me. It trickles down my face with the icy coldness of death! Oh, no—it was Bochari's act, not mine! Had I any hand in the mutilation of his limbs? It was the Rajaputs. For this crime they shall be exterminated. That head, crowned with silver hairs—full of all wisdom—the reproaches it breathes upon me, are poisoned arrows that enter my very soul! Oh, that those early days could be renewed, when I first looked upon the world and found it so beautiful—the air perfumed with spicy fragrance—full of the melody of birds—when seated beneath a mulberry-tree my heart was innocent—and poetry, and Arabian tales, and sweet music, constituted all my delight—days of bliss I shall know no more.”

“Is it your majesty's pleasure,” asked one of

the eunuchs, “that the banquet should be delayed?”

“Bring hither my son Chusero—bring him here instantly—say I must see him—his father must see him.”

The eunuch went to the harem, and leading forth a cherub boy, with golden hair flowing on his head in natural ringlets, eyes of the colour of the nutshell as to the pupil, the remainder of the orb a pearl beyond all price,—full cheeks, roseate with the glow of health; eyebrows arched and penciled as the first crescent of the moon; a mouth exquisitely sculptured, and smiling with intelligence and gentleness, placed him on the carpet near Jehangire. The child, in playful affection, passed his hand round the emperor’s neck, and that well-known word, “Papa!” breathed in a voice of the sweetest tenderness, at once recalled the monarch’s wandering thoughts to their more wholesome channels.

“Purvez! my charming boy! I had indeed forgotten myself, when I commanded them to bring me Chusero. Ah, my beloved! that you may never know the pangs which your brother has cost me! These beauteous hands—they are fair as the primrose. When, as you are

wont to do, you twine with these slender tapering fingers your favourite ringlet, and, notwithstanding all your mother's prohibitions, draw this tiny thumb far within your lips, deeming it an inexhaustible fountain of nectar, there is no picture of innocence and happiness on earth like to thine! What would I not give to exchange with thee at this moment! No—not exchange—Heaven forbid you should know half the griefs I have suffered!”

Jehangire's mind having been calmed down to a reasonable temperature by the prattle of his child, permitted his turban to be re-arranged, and proceeded to the evening meal, where, as usual, he found Bochari and several of the favourite officers of the household waiting for his presence. A few cups of Cabul wine soon altered the tenor of his thoughts. Having learned that his orders had been executed as to the preparations for advancing towards the insurgents on the following morning, he talked only of the vengeance which he hoped to inflict upon the author of the revolt and his confederates.

“ Let it be fully explained,” he said, “ to all my omrahs, that no man is to fail in the appli-

cation of the sources placed at his disposal. In the concerns of sovereign power there is neither child nor kin. The alien who exerts himself in my cause, is of more worth to me than a thousand sons or kindred. The son who, in the presumption of his heart, forgets the duty which he owes to his father, and the unnumbered marks of royal bounty bestowed upon him, is to me, in every sense, a stranger.

“ Have we not, in this respect, in Islam, a distinguished example prescribed, in the domestic policy of the monarchs of the house of Othman, who, for the stability of their royal authority, of all their sons preserve but one, considering it expedient to destroy all the rest? What, then, if, for the preservation of the state, if, to prevent the disorders that might otherwise interrupt the peace of the world, I should think it necessary to extinguish the mischief, though it shews itself in the bosom of my own family? Little, indeed, should I have to boast of my capacity for the exercise of the power entrusted to me, if, after such a flagrant proof of his total disregard of filial duty, with my eyes open, I should ever again be tempted to

entrust this wretched fugitive with the slightest share of delegated authority."

"Spoken like Acbar!" cried out Bochari.

"Safeguard of the world!—Sovereign splendour of the faith!" exclaimed the omrahs, "the victory is already yours."

"Delicious wine!" said Jehangire, holding out his large silver cup to be replenished. "The prophet, when he forbade his followers the generous element, certainly could not have visited Cabul."

"Very fortunate for us," observed Bochari, "that the Koran is so express on that point, otherwise the Cabulites would doubtless have kept their wine at home."

"I doubt," rejoined Auzeem, one of the omrahs, whom the emperor, in his convivial moments, honoured by the title of *uncle*, "whether the prophet was himself so abstemious as his laws ordain. I have heard it said, that in his own case, at least, he admitted certain cases of exception—such as illness—when he took a cup as medicine—or fatigue from a day's hunting—when he claimed a cup for refreshment—or if the rains prevented him from going abroad—when he found a cup or two necessary

in lieu of exercise—or if he was employed in writing the Koran—when the juice of the grape, he acknowledged, heightened his inspirations. If he married a young wife, he demanded a bowl to signalize his joy—if he lost an old wife, he took three or four bowls to enable him to sustain his sorrow.”

“Uncle, uncle, as great an infidel as ever! your pilgrimage to Mecca, I see, has done you no good.”

“And yet,” said Bochari, “if rumour may be believed, no pilgrim ever performed the sacred ceremonies with a greater appearance of zeal and devotion.”

“It was the pleasure of the late emperor that I should visit Mecca,” said Auzeem, “and being once there, really one could not help being religious. However, I am, once for all, about to repent. New laws, I hear, have been lately made against wine-drinking.”

“True—true—and they must be obeyed,” the emperor declared, as he emptied his cup. “As soon as I can see how they operate upon the mass of my subjects, whose happiness it is my first duty to consult, I shall begin to submit to them myself, and live on Ganges water.”

An attendant, who heard only the last words, conceived that Jehangire had asked for water, which he began to pour into his cup.

“Slave!” exclaimed the sovereign, “what is this?”

“Ganges water,” sire.

“Fool! to waste the sacred stock in this manner, keep it for the day of battle—wine—nothing but wine to-night.”

Auzeem could not repress his laughter. He was privileged. The laugh was contagious. It went round the circle, until the “splendor of the faith” joining in it, the apartment became a scene of uproar.

“How happens it,” asked Jehangire, “that there is no person about my court who reads the Koran with more elegant enunciation than my uncle; and yet no man, in my empire perhaps, pays so little regard to its precepts?”

“The truth is,” answered Auzeem, “that I am very diffident of my own judgment. I have often recited it to your majesty since you left the harem, and I am still waiting to discover the result of my exertions.”

“Is there no excuse for me? Encompassed as I have always been with youthful associates

of congenial minds, breathing the air of a delicious climate, ranging through lofty and splendid saloons, every part decorated with all the graces of painting and sculpture, and the floors bespread with the richest carpets of silk and gold,—would it not have been a species of folly to have rejected the aid of an exhilarating cordial—and what cordial can surpass the essence of the grape ?”

“ Besides,” rejoined Bochari, “ the laws against wine-drinking are absolutely necessary for the good of the people, who are made irritable and furious against each other, by excessive indulgence, to which their ignorance makes them subject ; whereas, the person who makes laws for them, must be supposed to possess a degree of knowledge that enables him to ascertain the limit to which he ought to go for the benefit of his health, and to act accordingly. It is no slight labour to be constantly sounding the great drum of sovereign power over an empire like Hindostan, two years’ journey in compass.”

“ Well said ! Bochari,” observed Jehangire, shewing his empty cup once more to the attendants ; “ there is no repose for crowned

heads. Hours, such as these, amongst old friends, are the only hours of happiness I now enjoy. Alas! for the jewels of this world, which have been poured in such profusion on my head; they bear no longer any value in my sight. There is not on this side of the grave any permanent felicity. All is fleeting, vain, perishable. In the twinkling of an eye shall we see the enchantress, which enslaves the world and its votaries, seize another and another victim; and so exposed is man to be trodden down by the calamities of life, that one might be almost persuaded to affirm that he never had existence."

Auzeem began to fear that the emperor's next words would be an order for the production of the Koran, which he often had read to him when over-heated with wine. Strange to say, on those occasions, he frequently prostrated himself in prayer, while Auzeem read to him from the volume of the prophet. The melodious sound of a flageolet, however, being heard outside the pavilion, Jehangire started up from his divan, and bade the attendants see who was the musician.

"If Oustad Nâë be in Hindostan," said

Auzeem, "he must be the man — the first player on the flageolet in the world."

"Bring him in," said the emperor; "I hold excellence in every science and art to be the true ornament of an empire."

The musician was introduced. He appeared a cunning-faced fellow, dressed in a pointed Persian cap, a shabby pelisse that had witnessed better days, a vest of faded brocade covering an ample paunch, which shewed that however wretched he now appeared, he had not been unaccustomed to good living; and loose linen trowsers, more than the half of which were devoted to the purposes of pockets. His forehead was deeply furrowed by age, his cheeks were browned by much exposure to the sun, and upon his chin there were a few short curly grey hairs that seemed in no haste to require the discipline of the barber. The sphere of one eye had altogether vanished from its place; and of the other, so small a portion remained susceptible of light, that the wonder was how he could see at all. His fingers were short and clumsy, most marvellously ill adapted, one should have thought, to modulate the tones of any instrument. Nevertheless, when he

took the reed of his flageolet in his mouth, and preluded to the air he was called upon to perform, his face lighted up with a fire truly beautiful to behold ; and from beneath those ill-favoured fingers emanated notes of the most enchanting clearness and harmony.

The emperor soon forgot, in the sprightly music of Oustad Nâë, the fit of prayer to which the wine had elevated him. " Never before," said he, repeatedly, " have such melodies as these thrilled my ear. I could listen to this piper for days together, and feel no desire for food or drink."

" Poor as ever, I perceive," said Auzeem. " I thought, my friend, that when I saw you at Shiraz, you were in a fair way to fortune."

" So I was, my lord, but in coming back from her, I lost my path, and have ever since been wandering to little purpose."

" I was told that even then you were a rich man."

" Alas, my lord ! who can say he is rich that has fourteen wives ?"

" Fourteen wives !" exclaimed the emperor, laughing aloud. " Can this be true, uncle ?"

“Quite true, sire. It is wonderful what a fancy Persian women have for ugly men. This Oustad Nâë,” continued Auzeem, speaking in Hindostanee, which the piper did not understand, “was absolutely idolized by the ladies of the court. They said, and perhaps believed, that they were beguiled by his unrivalled skill in music; but I have known some of them to contend, with a degree of rivalry almost amounting to civil war, for a single lock of that wool or hair, whichever it be, growing on his chin.”

“Ha! ha! ha! It must be admitted that the Persian dames have a peculiar taste. We must add him to our household band, but without his wives. Nâë, what has become of all your consorts?”

“They led me such a life, sire, that I have been obliged to escape from them all. My household now consists only of two dogs and a little girl, and it is wonderful how easy I have been in my mind since, depending entirely upon my flageolet, I have sought protection in the dominions of the ‘Subduer of the world.’ To shew my gratitude for so great a blessing, I have composed a melody in honour of your

highness, which, with your permission, I shall now play."

"By all means—let us hear it. Give him a cup of wine."

Nâë having, without any ceremony, drank off the generous beverage, proceeded with his melody, still well known under the title of "Sout-e-Jahangueiry," a very beautiful composition, mingling great tenderness of expression with a certain solemnity, which have given it a high place amongst the national songs of Hindostan.

The emperor, enraptured, forgot even his wine, while the musician repeated the air again and again. As soon as the performance was concluded, Jehangire ordered a pair of scales to be brought in, telling the piper that he knew of no mode of rewarding him except that of presenting him with his weight in gold. Upon receiving this information, Nâë, without uttering a syllable by way of thanks, ran out of the pavilion, and immediately after returning with a dog stuffed into each pocket of his trowsers, a piece of music fixed to one arm, and a little girl of about six years old in the other, put himself, thus burthened, into the scales! This ludicrous

method of adding to his own specific gravity, set the whole circle in a roar of laughter, in which the emperor heartily joined.

“Upon what plea,” asked Auzeem, “are these appendages added to your side of the scales, my friend?”

“Your lordship shall hear. When I composed this melody, I had this little girl in my arms, and my two dogs were playing with her.”

“And so they formed, as it were, the sources of your inspiration, and you claim their weight in addition to your own—not very complimentary to his majesty.”

“No matter—no matter,”—said Jehangire—“let the man and his family be placed in the balance.” Their weight having been duly ascertained, an order was written upon the imperial treasurers for the same weight in gold, which was to be given to the piper. The emperor then desired that they should be weighed again, and the amount was ordered to be paid to the little girl. Bochari held up his hands in rage at this lavish liberality of the emperor, but he knew that he could not prevent it, and that perhaps his resistance would only

cause the piper to be weighed again. The man was then dismissed ; but he had scarcely gone a few yards from the royal tent, when he retraced his steps, and asked that while he staid with the army he should be supplied daily with a camel-load of Ganges water. Auzeem could not tolerate such mingled avarice and insolence as this, and the fellow, after receiving his money, was turned out of the camp.

CHAPTER VIII.

King, do not grieve, but like a valiant chief,
Pluck from thy heart all terror of thine enemies,
And only deem of thy propitious fortune,
Or who shall foremost plunge into the fight.

HINDOO DRAMA.

A SHORT but profound sleep having relieved Jehangire from the effects of his copious libations, he proceeded to witness the concluding performances of the Bengalese, which were appointed to take place at midnight. The ladies of the harem, and the whole court, were in attendance in their usual places. The night was intensely dark, uncheered by the twinkling even of a solitary star. Three of the Bauzigurs made their appearance, all wrapped in white sheets,

from beneath which they produced mirrors that at first cast upon the sky a luminous reflection, bright as the lustre of the sun itself. Travellers, who, at the distance of ten days' journey from the camp, beheld that light, were deterred from pursuing their way, fearful that some convulsion had taken place in nature, by which the order of things had been reversed, and that the sun was thenceforth to take the place of the moon.

The illuminated space in the heavens soon exhibited to the eye an incredible number of towns and villages, thickly peopled, and apparently in the enjoyment of peace, and of riches of every description. Horsemen and infantry presently were seen emerging from the confines of darkness, and marching towards the principal town. The gates of the town opened, and a female of consummate beauty, clothed in armour, with a helmet of matchless splendor on her head, mounted in a wooden tower on an elephant, her bow and quiver by her side, and a burnished lance in her hand, came forth, followed by a numerous train of elephants, and warriors on foot and on horseback. The adverse forces met, rushing upon each other with

savage ardour. The shock was tremendous, thousands lay dead on either side. The invaders fled back in confusion to their encampment. Some time was spent in burning the dead on either side, amidst the solemn sounds of trumpets, which were heard wailing for the heroes that had perished.

The queen, as soon as the obsequies were over, re-assembled her troops, and pointing to the camp of the enemy, called upon them to follow her forthwith, and to attack it. The leaders declined the enterprize, and returned to weep over the ashes of their companions. The enemy, refreshed, came forth to renew the combat. The queen prepared to meet him, but with difficulty prevailed on her troops to advance. The conflict was renewed with great slaughter. The forces of the heroine rapidly diminished, many falling on the field, more basely deserting her standard, and diving into the night. She received an arrow in the eye, which she instantly extricated. Another arrow passed through her neck. Dimness swam before her eyes, and she began to nod from side to side in her tower. The driver of her elephant, faithful to his mistress, urged the noble animal

forward, who, conscious of her situation, seemed resolved, by his indomitable wrath, to avenge her injuries. Whithersoever he turned, the impassioned creature trampled down numbers of the foe.

The spirit of the queen, which had almost departed from her, now returned. She cheered the elephant in his victorious progress, until his steps were at length arrested by a net of chains, from which he could not disentangle himself. She called upon her driver to end her life with his dagger. He refusing, she snatched the weapon from his girdle, and plunging it into her bosom, expired. The conquerors marched on to the town, of which, after brave resistance from the garrison, they took possession. Loads of timber, and straw, and oil were collected in a large house, into which the garrison were driven; the house was then set fire to; the conflagration was awful; the groans of the victims were so agonizing, that the emperor drew his scymitar, and hurrying forth from his seat, as if to rescue the unfortunate sufferers, was met in the crowd of courtiers by an assassin, who struck a knife up to the hilt into his side.

A faint cry escaped from Jehangire, but such was the confusion of the moment that nobody seemed to understand what had happened. Flambeaus were brought. The emperor was found bleeding on the ground, the knife still remaining in his side. Auzeem, and a body of the omrahs, immediately bore him into his pavilion, while Bochari, taking with him the guard of eunuchs, ran to the gate of the screen walls, by which the imperial tents were surrounded. Cries of treason resounded on all sides. Suspicion instantly fell upon the Bengalese, who were placed under arrest. In a few moments the guards of the imperial quarters brought in a man, whom they found climbing over the screens, and unable to give any excuse for his conduct. The prisoner turned out to be one of the attendants of the Bauzigurs. The suspicions against them were thus turned into certainty, and if the councils of Bochari had been followed, the seven, and their three followers, would have been sacrificed on the spot.

Auzeem however interposed, and as the night was now far advanced, it was resolved that the further investigation into this atrocious deed

should be postponed until the following morning. In the mean-time orders were issued to suspend the march of the army.

With the returning day, poured into the camp a thousand rumours of the assassination of the emperor, some representing that he had fallen a victim to the intrigues of Bochari, who aimed at the throne for himself; some setting forth that the crime was perpetrated by the Bengalese, at the instigation of Chusero, while others hinted that under the influence of too much wine, Jehangire had made an attempt on his own life. The state physicians pronounced the wound not dangerous, and promised that the sovereign would be convalescent in a few days, his weakness at the moment arising from the loss of much blood. This intelligence diffused satisfaction amongst the troops, and prevented the tendency to tumult which had already manifested itself.

The Bengalese, and their attendants, having been brought before the officers of justice, in the tent dedicated to public business, were examined separately as to their knowledge of the prisoner, whose efforts to make his escape had necessarily pointed him out as the principal

criminal. Their testimony, given apart from each other, perfectly agreed in the statement, that the alleged assassin, and his two companions, had overtaken them on their road to the northern provinces ; communicated to them a message, with which they said they had been charged by the emperor, to command the attendance of the Bauzigurs in the camp ; and that, in obedience to that supposed order it was they had sought, and, as they believed, obtained admission to the imperial presence, which, otherwise, at such a moment, they should not have thought of soliciting, not imagining, that a great sovereign actually engaged in preparations for the field, would have had disposition or leisure for such amusements as their humble skill might afford.

The fugitive prisoner was next examined. His first statement was, that being naturally of a timid disposition, when he learned that the emperor was assassinated, he knew not but that the next victim might be himself, he being a stranger in the camp, and that he, therefore, sought safety in flight. Being questioned about his comrades, he represented them as poor men, who were anxious to better their

fortunes ; and that, he being in a similar condition, they had offered their services to the Bauzigurs, to whom they suggested the probable benefits of a visit to the imperial camp. Upon being put to the torture, he admitted that they had fabricated the message to which the Bauzigurs alluded. His comrades, having been separately interrogated, disagreed with him and with each other, in so many particulars, and gave their evidence in a manner so pregnant with suspicion, that they were also put on the rack. The whole truth at length came out, by the confession of the youngest of the three, who declared that they had been employed as emissaries by the insurgents, to explore the camp, and to ascertain the probable movements of the imperial troops. With a view, however, to save his own life, he alleged that the assassination of Jehangire formed the chief object of their mission, if any opportunity should be presented to them for accomplishing it, and he said that upon that point they had received their instructions from Chusero himself.

Upon the conclusion of the investigation, the Bauzigurs were unanimously acquitted of all participation in the crime ; but as the contrary

belief still actuated the great bulk of the troops, Auzeem caused them to be escorted, the following night by a body of the household guards, beyond the precincts of the camp. The three emissaries were condemned to death. They were each stripped naked, and then clothed in asses' skins, in which they were led through the camp, exposed to the derision of the multitude. The shouts that rang the air, as they passed through the different divisions of the military assemblage, acted like balm on the wound of the imperial invalid, who, whatever may have been the errors of his heart or his head, acknowledged, at all times, that it was his greatest delight to know and to feel that he was beloved by his people.

As soon as this ceremony was performed, the criminals were sewed up in skins, which had been previously distended as much as possible, after having been saturated in water. They were then placed on a sand-bank, exposed to the hottest rays of the sun, and, by the gradual shrinking of the hides, their frames were so compressed, that the agonies they endured were dreadful. To prolong their punishment, water was now and then sprinkled on the hides,

which were again exposed to the sun. They thus lingered in excruciating agonies for three days, and when at last the soundless masses proclaimed that they were no longer the abode of life, they were kicked through the whole assembled army into the river Sursoom, near which the camp was pitched.

Upon the convalescence of the emperor, the camp was broken up, and the troops proceeded towards the Sutledge, where the enemy were reported to have been posted in great force. Jehangire, when mounted once more on Indragui, resolved on shewing no mercy to a son, who, as the late occurrence had taught him to believe, was so lost to all sense of filial recollections, as to meditate the murder of a parent.

In order to escape from the dust of the high road, Jehangire, and a few of the officers of his staff, took the bye-paths which led through shady groves and cultivated fields. Perceiving a man coming towards them, the emperor, who was anxiously watching for some omen of success, demanded his name. The stranger replied, that his name was "Mûrad-Khaujah," signifying the "auspicious."

“Heaven be praised!” exclaimed the emperor, “my desire shall be obtained.”

A little farther on they met another man, driving before him an ass loaded with fire-wood, and having a burthen of brambles on his own back. He was also called upon to disclose his name, when he declared it to be “Dowlet-Khaujah.”

Jehangire was in raptures. “Our fortunes would be complete,” said he, “if we should now meet with a third person, bearing the same name.”

Great, therefore, was his surprise and satisfaction, when observing a little boy in a field, who was tending a cow grazing, he caused a similar inquiry to be made. He received for answer, that the boy called himself “Saadet-Khaujah.”

In order to perpetuate the memory of these happy prognostications, Jehangire directed that from that moment all the affairs of his government should be classed under three heads, to be called “Eymaun-o-Thalâtha,” or the “Three Signs.”

After crossing one of the main branches of the Gogur river, the emperor learned that there

lived in the neighbourhood a recluse, on whose head fell from the skies every Friday evening throughout the year, a shower of gold coin. Determined to ascertain the truth of this report, he proceeded to visit the dervish, whom he found seated on the ground before the entrance to a cavern, surrounded by four hundred of his disciples, clothed in skins. The hermit offered to the emperor no token whatever of respect, although the latter made to him the customary salaam, in the most humble manner, and did every thing in his power to entice him into conversation.

At last, after nearly half-an-hour's uninterrupted silence, the dervish said,—“ I serve that king who sustains rambling about the earth, many such kings as thou art.” Here another long pause ensued. The emperor prayed that the hermit would instruct him in his duties. Again awaking from an apparent lethargy, the dervish sternly said,—“ Strive for the repose of God's creatures, committed to thy care. In the agents whom thou mayest employ in the different provinces of thy empire, be it thy study to discover and reject such as are tyrannical and rapacious. Pursue and punish the secret per-

petrators of murders. Such men you shall find at Serhind, and elsewhere. Whilst thou hast power, exercise it discreetly. Cherish the grey beard and the dervish. Scoff not at the aged man, weighed down by the hand of affliction. Kindle not the flame which consumes the broken-hearted. Be not at one time a trifler—at another grave. Art thou full? Give not words to the wind. Be not evil-minded, lest thy words be evil. Be not slanderous, if thou wouldst avoid a name of reproach. Let thy treatment of thy eldest son be merciful, for he is misled.”

To these words, pregnant with sage admonition, and confirmatory of the omens which had already favoured the progress of the emperor, he listened with equal admiration and delight. The evening, (it happened fortunately to be the evening of Friday,) closing in, tapers were lighted, and the venerable recluse proceeded to the performance of his devotions, bending his body, at intervals, eight times to the earth. Immediately afterwards, five of the eldest of his disciples stood before him in an erect posture, while he raised his hands towards heaven. He had scarcely commenced this act of adoration,

when, all at once, a shower of golden ashrefies fell on his head from the sky, which, when collected, amounted in value to a thousand gold rupees. These coins the hermit divided into two equal parts, one of which he presented to the emperor, the other he shared amongst his disciples. Jehangire, desirous of testifying his respect for a recluse of so much sanctity, offered to endow his cloister with the revenue of the neighbouring villages, producing annually about fifty thousand gold rupees, for the subsistence of the devout men who attended upon him. "Apply your money," said the saint, "to the support of those whose reliance is upon human charity. I need it not."

When the emperor returned to the army, and the news of his visit to the dervish had spread abroad, it was communicated to him that the son of Khann-e-Douraun had dared to turn his conduct on the occasion into ridicule. "How childish!" said he, "in the emperor, to be magic-blinded by this canting dervish." Such language as this could not be overlooked. Jehangire therefore commanded that one side of his head and face should be flayed, and in that state he was led through the army, proclama-

tion being made, at the same time, that such was the punishment which awaited those who applied disrespectful language to their sovereign. It further appeared that this young man, on a previous visit to the same dervish, had demeaned himself very contemptuously, and that the hermit told him he should not go so far as to take his head, his youth and rashness being beneath his notice; "but," said he, "I shall have thee flayed." Thus were the words of the holy man fulfilled to the letter.

CHAPTER IX.

They suffered justly according to their own wickedness ; for they exercised a more detestable hospitality than any : others indeed received not strangers unknown to them, but these brought their guests into bondage, that had deserved well of them.

BOOK OF WISDOM.

WHILE the imperial army continued their march towards the ground occupied by the insurgents, Jehangire, finding that the unavoidably slow progress of so large a force gave him the opportunity of paying a visit to Serhind, proceeded to that city attended by a numerous escort of his household guards. Serhind was, at that period, a city of great extent, famed for its wealth, the number and splendour of its temples, and other public edifices, and the magnificence of its private mansions and gar-

dens. It was the abode of men of every nation and faith. Its women, proverbial for their beauty, were not strictly confined within harems, as in other parts of Hindostan; and abounding as it did in luxuries of every description, the great business of life there seemed to be the pursuit of pleasure under all its most alluring forms.

The periodical reports of the local authorities addressed to the emperor had, for some time, noticed the frequent disappearance from the bosom of their families, of females belonging to the better classes of society. Although the members of the families thus deprived of their best ornaments, and the officers of the police had combined their incessant exertions, in order to discover the source of this most serious evil, they had hitherto failed to make out even the slightest clue which might assist them in the accomplishment of their object. The exactions, also, of the principal farmer of the revenue were complained of. Both these matters the emperor had resolved to inquire into personally, with the view of affording his subjects all the redress that was in his power.

On arriving at Serhind, where his majesty

was received with every mark of affectionate loyalty and respect, he sent immediately for the chief collector of the revenue, and called upon him to answer to the charges of rapacity and oppression that were made against him, and, especially, to shew upon what ground he had dared to continue the tax of the Zekkaut, which the emperor, upon his accession to the throne, had most strictly forbidden to be levied any more. This was a tax previously imposed upon all the subjects of the empire, the Moslems only excepted. The collector, arrayed in a turban wreathed with diamonds, and a chaplet of large pearls hung round his neck, of the value of at least a lak of rupees, attended by a numerous retinue, also clad in sumptuous attire, paid his homage to the emperor in the most obsequious style, and then proceeded to defend his conduct, upon the plea that the Hindoos being idolaters and infidels, it was fitting that they should pay the Zekkaut for the toleration they enjoyed, and that, moreover, they had amassed great wealth, of which a due proportion, he conceived, ought to go to the treasury of the state, under whose protection they had risen from poverty to affluence.

“ Idolators and infidels !” exclaimed the emperor, glad of an opportunity to display his knowledge on this subject. “ Such the ignorant amongst them may be, but it is no part of my duty to condemn a whole nation for the ignorance of the poor and the uneducated. If they be in error, and if it be the will of the Supreme Being to punish them for that error, am I called upon to augment the measure of divine justice ? If He pardon them, am I to be so presumptuous as to stand between them and His mercy ? Their Pundits may have in former ages fallen into some mistakes as to the adoration which the Hindoos pay to images. But in my late conferences with those learned doctors, I have convinced them that an idol cannot be a God, the Almighty being eternally exempt from change or decay, having neither length nor breadth, nor any shape visible to mortal eye. I shewed them that to consider figures, moulded in brass, or carved in wood, as the immediate objects of worship, was a most fearful doctrine, since worship is due to God alone, supreme in glory. It is true, that they still retain in their temples the idols to which I suppose you al-

lude, but it is only because the mind, being in itself so liable to be distracted while at prayer by external objects, they find it necessary to have images before them, solely dedicated to God and his attributes, as otherwise they would find it imposible to settle their attention to a steady contemplation of the perfections of the Omnipotent. Of this no Moslem has a right to complain.

“ Besides, what was the language addressed to me by my father, (now in Paradise !) when in the ignorance of youth, I asked him why the haunts of idolatry, as I then deemed them, were not to be overthrown ? ‘ My dear child,’ said he, ‘ I find myself a puissant monarch, the shadow of God upon earth. I have seen that he bestows the blessings of his gracions providence upon all his creatures, without distinction. Ill should I discharge the duties of my exalted station, were I to withhold my compassion and indulgence from any of those entrusted to my charge. With all of the human race, with all God’s creatures, I am at peace ; why then should I permit myself, under any consideration, to be the cause of molestation or aggression to any one ? Moreover, are not five parts

in six of mankind, either Hindoos, or aliens to the Mahometan faith? Were I to be governed by motives of the kind suggested in your inquiry, what alternative can I have but to put them all to death? I have thought it therefore my wisest plan to let these men alone.

“Neither is it to be forgotten, that the class of men of whom we are speaking, in common with the other inhabitants of Serhind, are usefully engaged, either in the pursuit of science or the arts, or of improvements for the benefit of mankind, and that there are indeed to be found in this city men of every description, and of every religion on the face of the earth.”

The collector, a man far advanced in years, and full of the pride of that superiority which his Moslem faith gave him, as he supposed, above all those who professed a different doctrine, held up his hands in astonishment when he heard these words fall from the lips of his sovereign. He was proceeding to enlarge upon his tried zeal for the throne, for the house of Acbar, for the preservation of the faith, and on the dangers in which such novel doctrines must involve the empire, especially if the zekkaut

were to be given up ; when Jehangire demanded what proportion of the tax the collector reserved to himself, and how much of it entered the exchequer ? This question the official said he could not answer without the production of accounts, which he had never before been called upon to render. They should however be made out, if such were the wish of the “Safeguard of the world.”

Upon the accounts being examined, it turned out that for every rupee of the zekkaut paid into the imperial treasury, five were pocketed by the collector. In order to escape from the difficulty in which this discovery placed him, he offered, as the emperor was now embarked in a war, necessarily attended with great expense, if the zekkaut were continued, to pay in advance the assessment of three whole years, amounting to as much gold as five hundred camels heavily laden could carry.

Jehangire, considering himself fully justified, under the circumstances, in getting possession at all events of the treasure thus tendered, ordered the collector to bring him the money forthwith. In the course of a few hours he reappeared, himself leading the foremost of five

hundred stout camels, all laden with gold to the utmost ounce they could bear, each load covered in wrappers of the finest scarlet of Irâk. Ten of the loads the emperor ordered to be distributed amongst his escort, the remainder to be conveyed to his exchequer at Agra.

“It would be satisfactory to me,” said the emperor, “now to know, whether the whole of this gold, which you have laid at my feet, was exclusively your own property, or whether it belonged in part to others, who wish to share with you in the profits arising out of the collection of the zekkaut.”

“Sire,” replied the extortioner, deeply hurt at the supposition, “my cellars still retain more than double the quantity which you now see before you.”

“What ! all your own property !”

“Inherited from my father—now in the bosom of the prophet ! When on the eve of death, he disclosed to me that in a certain secret place under ground he had concealed, in large jars, a mass of treasure, which, in the hour of distress, he might employ to relieve himself. I was therefore under no necessity for bringing discredit on my name by borrowing.”

“Impossible ! I cannot believe it.”

“I know it, sire, to be the truth that I say.”

“If so, then you cannot hesitate to let one of my officers see the treasure you speak of.”

The collector acceded, without hesitation, to the emperor's proposal. An officer was forthwith appointed to inspect the vaults, who, upon his return, reported the collector's statement as by no means exaggerated, for that in his judgment fifteen hundred camels could not convey, at the rate of one load each, the jars filled with gold, which he had seen in the subterranean stores in question.

“It would not be just,” thought Jehangire, “if I were to take possession of the treasures remaining in the jars, as they manifestly belong to this man's children. But his attempt to continue the zekkaut is not to be forgiven.”

The emperor retired to his closet, where he ordered the immediate attendance of Kuly, his chief executioner. That formidable minister of vengeance in a few minutes presented himself before the sovereign.

“You will find the collector of Serhind,” said Jehangire, “at his own house,—bow-string him. His turban, and chaplet, and dress, are

yours. Bind round his loins a linen scarf, and set him, in all other respects naked, on a camel, and so conduct him through all parts of the town, at the same time proclaiming, in a loud voice—‘ Such is the punishment to which that man is doomed, who, when his sovereign, from a paternal regard to his people, has remitted the impost of the zekkaut, dared to continue it, and to advise its legal restoration, thus violating the most sacred laws, and attempting by his counsels to give the thoughts of the sovereign a direction, replete with evil to the subject, and dishonour to himself.’ ”

The order was carried into execution the same evening, amidst the plaudits of the inhabitants of Serhind.

Amongst the personages of distinction, who waited the next day upon the emperor, to return his majesty thanks for this signal mark of his attention to the welfare of his people, was Abdul, generally known at Serhind as a Mogul employed in the pursuit of commercial concerns, and possessed of wealth to an amount, which it was said even he himself could not calculate. His palace, the galleries containing his collections of works of art, his gardens and

fountains, all surrounded by a lofty wall of enormous thickness, were the principal ornaments of Serhind, rich as that city was in edifices of excelling splendour.

Abdul, on taking leave, expressed a hope, that before his majesty quitted Serhind, he would deign to permit the shadow of his celestial presence to be seen within his humble abode. Jehangire accepted the invitation; and when the business of the day was concluded, attended by Auzeem, and his ordinary suite, proceeded to the residence of the Mogul.

Embarking on the river, in a twelve-oared galley belonging to Abdul, they were landed on a flight of marble steps, white as snow, which led to a massive bronze gate, moving in a solid frame of porphyry, richly inlaid with gold and lapis lazuli. The master of the mansion was on the marble stairs, waiting to receive them. The gate, which flew open at his command, was immediately closed with a ringing sound, like that of a bell. They immediately found themselves in a covered avenue of sycamores, affording a most delicious shade, planted on each side with scarlet roses. Beyond the avenue were groves of cypress, firs,

plane-trees, and evergreens, so disposed as to leave between them all a wide circle, which formed a garden, laid out in beds that teemed with every flower under the sun, each the most perfect of its kind. In the midst of the garden played a fountain of limpid water, which, when occasion required, cast its refreshing dews upon the flower-beds surrounding it. The fragrance of this garden, and its seclusion amidst the groves; the murmurs of the pellucid waters, and the songs of many birds, hid in the adjacent shades, filled the heart of the emperor with transports of delight. "Ah!" thought he, "if Nourmahal were here!"

An ascent, through one of the groves, led the visitors to an elevated terrace, planted with lines of orange and citron-trees on each side, between every pair of which were seen, on pedestals of red granite of Egypt, statues of exquisite workmanship in bronze, gold, and silver, in alabaster, and in marble that rivalled alabaster as to the spotless purity and freshness of its colour. In an alcove, a colossal warrior in bronze held on his left arm a golden shield, of well-proportioned dimensions, upon which the exploits of Acbar were delineated in

bold relief, with a degree of accuracy, elegance, and animation, that astonished even the practised eye of Auzeem.

The terrace led to an octagonal pavilion, raised two stories high, surrounded by a double colonnade of jasper pillars, exhibiting from a gallery that ran round the dome, an enchanting view of the neighbouring country. The interior of the pavilion was painted in various compartments, in which were seen processions of slaves captured in battle, and bearing to their conquerors offerings of all the fruits of the earth, the insterstices being filled with figures of birds engaged in flight or pursuit, so as to display their character and plumage in the most striking point of view.

This pavilion was composed of two saloons, each capable of affording accommodation to a thousand guests. Four round towers graced and strengthened the outer walls of the edifice. Through one of these towers visitors ascended, by a spiral staircase, to the upper saloon; a second tower was reserved for the visitors descending; and the other two yielded each a small circular apartment, lined by mirrors, and permitting the sky to be seen through a roof

of glass. In the lower saloon, coffee, sherbet, and ices, were served to all those for whose enjoyment the Mogul threw open his gardens once a week. The upper saloon was devoted to music and dancing, and the mirrored apartment to tête-a-tête conversations.

Abdul's mansion was of the castellated form, and occupied a spacious square beyond the pavilion. It had not been for many years open to public view. The interior apartments, those especially of the harem, were said to be furnished in a truly regal style, the floors covered with gold-woven carpets, the walls hung with cloth of gold from Khorassan, with velvets from Gujerat, and figured tapestry, both European and Chinese.

The Mogul appeared to experience no small measure of pride, as he led the emperor along the terrace to the pavilion, where, after pipes and coffee, iced wines sweetmeats and confectionery were presented to his majesty, on salvers of massive gold, by a numerous train of attendants. Jehangire next expected to be shown through the Mogul's house; but the latter excused himself on account of its being

under repair, and not in a state to receive the sovereign of Hindostan.

Auzeem threw out some hints about the number and beauty of the ladies, whom so much wealth, and such distinguished taste could not fail to have assembled in the harem; but, to his surprise, he learned that Abdul had no wives, and that from some disappointment of the heart, in the early part of his life, he had uniformly declined all the advances of those parents, who, in compassion for his misfortune, tendered their daughters, to share in his unbounded opulence.

On his return from the garden of the Mogul, the emperor, assisted by Auzeém, had a long conference with the civil officers of justice upon the disappearance of so many females of rank and station, as noticed in their reports, and upon the ineffectual steps that had been adopted in order to detect the mode in which it took place. On looking carefully through the reports, and comparing the dates of those mysterious occurrences, it struck Auzeem as singular, that they pretty generally coincided with the evenings on which Abdul's gardens were opened for the reception of his numerous visitors, comprising, indeed,

all the families of Serhind above the caste of artisans and secondary merchants. It seemed not an improbable supposition, that upon their return from the gardens, which was generally late in the night, sometimes accident, inevitable in narrow and crowded streets,—sometimes young men heated by wine, taking advantage of the obscurity to possess themselves of women on whom they had fixed their affections,—sometimes the revenge of rejected lovers,—sometimes the propensity to suicide or murder, had combined to produce these deplorable results. But in answer to these hypotheses it was stated, that there was scarcely an evening in the week, during the fine season of the year, when assemblages equally numerous had not taken place, either in private or public gardens, and that no similar consequence had been observed to distinguish them one from the other.

Another peculiar feature marked these mysterious occurrences. The victims were uniformly those females whose apparel was most costly, no matter of what age, or whether beautiful or deformed. The conclusion was obvious, that the value of their attire had some connexion with the cause of their abstraction, and

it was therefore surmised, that a band of criminals must be confederated for the purpose of enriching themselves upon the spoil taken from the persons whom, probably with that view alone, they deprived of life. But then, where were the remains of the females so murdered? These had never been discovered in any one instance. The farther the inquiry extended, the more perplexing it became. The officers of justice confessed that they could throw no light upon the matter.

“Do you happen to know,” asked Auzeem, “whether the artizans engaged in the repairs of the Mogul’s mansion are Hindoos or foreigners? If foreigners, it is barely possible that they might, in this manner, supply themselves with rich wives, whom they may have some means of sending out of the country.”

The officers replied, that they were not aware of the mansion in question being under repair, and that it was impossible any considerable number of artizans, native or foreign, could be engaged in any such occupation without their knowledge, as all such persons, and the places where they were employed were regularly entered on the registry. An answer, however, on

this point might be easily obtained from the Mogul himself. A kotewaul was immediately despatched for this purpose, who returned with intelligence, that the Mogul was not at home, but that, from all the inquiry he could make amongst the artizans of the neighbourhood, he had no doubt that there were no repairs going on in Abdul's house, which had, indeed, been shut up for more than ten years.

This account was inconsistent with the statement made by the Mogul to the emperor. Jehangire expressed his surprise. Auzeem suggested that before they proceeded farther, this matter should, at all events, be cleared up. There was, perhaps, nothing in it; however it seemed to require explanation: for if workmen were employed there unknown to the police, it was against the law.

Two of the officers were despatched to investigate this point. They proceeded to the gardens, where they found Abdul, walking on his terrace alone, enjoying the evening breeze. To their inquiries he answered, without hesitation, that they must have been erroneously informed, as he had had no repairs done to his house for many years, and had no artizans then in

his employment. They said, that it was their duty to satisfy themselves by a personal inspection of the house, to which he could, of course, have no objection.

Abdul, they observed, turned deadly pale at this suggestion, and trembled violently. He complained of not being well, adding, that if they presented themselves the next morning, he would be happy to comply with their desire. The officers retired, having fixed to return at sun-rise.

Soon after that hour they appeared before the emperor, and reported to him the interview which they had had with Abdul the previous evening ; they then said, that they proceeded to his house at the time appointed, but that they could not gain admission. Jehangire began to suspect that there was something more in this inquiry than he had at first apprehended. He therefore directed the officers to apply again at the gates, and if they were not opened, to cause them to be forced. The officers, in obedience to his orders, went again to the residence of the Mogul, but all the gates were closed against them. They proceeded accordingly to use force ; with the assistance of the pioneers they scaled the walls

of the gardens, and effected an entrance into the mansion, which they found apparently uninhabited, though furnished in the most sumptuous style. A noise, as of something having fallen on the floor, attracted their attention to an apartment, the door of which was shut. They tried to open the door, but it resisted their efforts until, by applying their united strength, they burst it open. Here they found the Mogul stretched lifeless on the floor, and on the divan near him, a large cup half full of a liquid, which upon examination, turned out to be essence of poppies. The vital spark appeared to have just fled, as, although the heart was still, the colour of life had not wholly deserted his cheek.

One of the officers having acquainted the emperor with the intelligence of this event, Jehangire, attended by Auzeem, hastened to the spot, and further researches having been made, a subterraneous chamber was at length discovered, in which chests were found filled with rich female dresses, to the number of seven hundred. In the same chamber were discovered other chests, replete with wreaths of diamonds and other precious stones, necklaces of pearl, and gold trinkets.

From this chamber they made their way through a long winding passage to another, from which emanated a most disagreeable odour. By the feeble light which reached it, from a narrow window near the ceiling, they perceived a spacious fire-place nearly filled with ashes ; intermixed with which, they found an amazing number of fragments of human bones. No further evidence was necessary, to shew the diabolical species of commerce in which the Mogul merchant must have been for years engaged. It was only to be regretted that, by inflicting the penalty of his crimes with his own hand, he had anticipated the decrees of justice.

One of the officers, suspecting that there might be a communication between this chamber of death and the pavilion on the terrace, searched narrowly all round, until he groped his way through a short narrow passage to a staircase. Ascending the staircase, until he was stopped by a door, he pushed it open, and found himself, when the door was shut, completely surrounded by mirrors, the arched-roof being composed of glass, through which he saw the sky.

Further examination enabled the pioneers to ascertain that this mirrored alcove was capable of being elevated by the simple machinery of ropes, pullies, and weights, and that, when raised to its utmost height, it gave admission to the upper story of the pavilion, through one of the four round towers of that beautiful building.

Entering the other mirrored apartment, in the opposite tower, after several experiments, they found, that by pressing a spring, concealed in the divan, which ran all round, the apartment imperceptibly sank to the bottom of the tower; whence, also, there was a communication to the sepulchral chamber.

While the festivities of the evening were at their height, the Mogul, or one of his associates, doubtless engaged a devoted victim to converse with him in either of these apartments; a group of his confederates gathered, in the meantime, at the door leading to it, would divert attention from his proceedings. Having descended to the bottom of the tower, he would lead her to the spot where she would be sacrificed in an instant, stripped of her apparel, and then consumed. The alcove would, in the meantime, be restored to its place by his assistants. He

would speedily rejoin the gay throng in the saloons, and in this manner it must have been, that he dispatched as many as five or six splendidly dressed women in the course of an evening.

The dresses and ornaments discovered in the chests, were publicly exhibited, and most of them were recognised by the families of the unhappy persons, by whom they had been worn. The inmates of the mansion were undoubtedly participators in the guilt of the Mogul, and acted, when necessary, ostensibly in the capacity of his servants. They had all fled, justly apprehensive of the vengeance of the emperor, who ordered the mansion to be demolished, its furniture to be sold for the benefit of the poor, and the gardens to be preserved at the expense of the state, for the use of the inhabitants of Serhind. Thus were the two grievances pointed out by the Dervish, effectually redressed by Jehangire.

CHAPTER X.

Heads glittering with polished gold, divided by the blade, drop incessantly ; and mangled bodies, wallowing in their gore, lay like fragments of mighty rocks, sparkling with gems and precious ores. Millions of sighs and groans arise on every side ; and the sun is overcast with blood, as they clash their arms, and wound each other with their dreadful instruments of destruction.

MAHABHARAT.

THE scouts sent out by Chusero, rapidly returned on the heels of each other, announcing daily the nearer and nearer approach of the imperial army. The Sutledge was full to the margin, and as all the bridges had been broken down, and the ferry-boats destroyed, the insurgents relied upon the position they had taken up as one not easy to be reduced. Their line was compact, and skilfully arranged. Their

strength in artillery was limited, but it was disposed of to the greatest advantage. Fifty heavy pieces of cannon were chained together, to guard that part of the river which offered the most favourable chances of passage to the enemy. The left wing, composed of the Cashmere auxiliaries under Afkun, was disposed somewhat higher up the river, armed with spears, slings, and bows. The Rajaputs under Man-Singh watched the passages of the river on the right; while the troops commanded by Hussein, partly composed of matchlockmen, partly of spearmen and cavalry, took their station in the centre, behind the artillery. Companies of elephants, bearing men armed with matchlocks and heavy javelins, were distributed through the three divisions of the army, and the prince, with a small reserve of cavalry, took his post upon an eminence, commanding a view of the river and of the plains beyond it to a considerable distance. They were in all sixty thousand fighting men.

Bochari, accurately informed of the disposition of the insurgent forces, moved forward with great caution towards the higher banks of the Sutledge, above the station occupied by Afkun,

expecting that he might be able to ford it in that direction, and so turn the left flank of the enemy. When, by the first light of the sun, he beheld the glistening line of the river, he ordered a strong body of cavalry, assisted by a company of the light artillery, to move rapidly in column, and dashing headlong through the Sutledge to establish themselves if possible on the farther bank. The remainder of the light artillery he directed to open a fire upon Afkun's division.

Chusero, who was mounted on his swift-paced elephant, at an early hour speedily perceived in the distance the thread-like columns hastening across the plain. After dispatching messengers along the line, to announce the presence of the enemy, and the movement they had made, he proceeded with his reserve to the assistance of Afkun, who was already on the alert. The banks of the Sutledge were high and precipitous in the direction aimed at by Bochari, and the current deep and extremely rapid. Nevertheless, before Chusero could reach the spot, the foremost horses of the foe were plunged in the stream, and ascending the opposite bank. He proceeded to attack them as fast as his troops could come up, but such was the vigour

of the onset of his enemies, owing to the superior strength of their horses, that they gained upon him until Afkun, seeing what was taking place, mounting his charger, and calling upon a troop of his cavalry to follow him, rushed into the river, which he speedily crossed. Despising the efforts of the light artillery opposed to him, he directed his march at once against the column of cavalry commanded by Bochari, and succeeding in breaking their line, cut them off from those who had already advanced into the stream. Chusero being, in the mean time, strongly reinforced, entered into the conflict with spirit, and drove back the tide of assailants. Their retreat was attended with great confusion, as many of their comrades were still contending against the rapidity of the current.

Chusero followed up his advantage, driving the enemy before him, sword in hand, who, perceiving that they were separated from their comrades, turned the heads of their horses down the current. The bank occupied by the insurgents was immediately lined by bowmen; they poured clouds of arrows upon the fugitives, most of whom perished in the river. Afkun,

having accomplished his object, retreated in good order to his former position.

The imperial troops now advanced thickly into the plain, appearing in the distance like an enormous flight of locusts. Jehangire, apprized of the failure of Bochari's first attempt to turn the left flank of the insurgents, ordered all his artillery in front. As the drivers took their ground in succession, the gunners opened their fire, and the line becoming every moment more lengthened, the thunder of the field augmented with terrific energy. It was answered from the hostile ranks in compact volleys, which were discharged with great effect, the crowd of balls issuing from the chained artillery, acting like the mower's scythe, and causing tremendous gaps in the masses of the advancing cavalry and infantry on the imperial side.

The theatre of battle on either side of the Sutledge was by noon enveloped in a dense cloud of smoke, illumined only near the guns by the flashes of fire which burst from them as they hurled forth their weapons of death. The ardour of the Rajaputs under Man-Singh could not be restrained. Taking advantage of the obscurity which hung over them, they crossed the

river in one body, and scouring the plain, hewed down cavalry, infantry, camels, every thing with which they came in contact. Then returning to their position they rested awhile, until their fearless commander again gave the word for another experiment of the same perilous nature. Afkun, more prudent, remained within the position entrusted to his keeping, which he defended with great valour against the repeated efforts of the imperialists to effect a passage in that direction. Hussein, being in the centre, had as yet no opportunity of distinguishing himself, his front being covered by the artillery, whose fire continued to be most destructive. Chusero might be seen during the thickest of the fight in all parts of the field, exposing his person in the most fearless manner, encouraging and inspiring his men by the hopes of success which he declared were brightening every where in his favour.

Bochari observing the rashness with which Man-Singh frequently advanced from his post to carry the battle to the imperial side of the river, directed a numerous division of cavalry to arrange themselves behind an eminence, below that part of the river occupied by the Rajaputs,

with orders to wait there until they were informed that the Rajaputs had again crossed the river, and then to make a bold effort to seize upon the position of the enemy. In the mean time he stationed another body of cavalry to receive the Rajaputs, and engage them with an apparent determination of fierce resistance; but, after a few moments, to retreat, so as to draw the foe after them as far as he would follow. He had a train of elephants ready to march down on the river the moment his men began the feigned retreat, so as to form a rampart against the Rajaputs on their return.

These orders were executed with great precision. The Rajaputs had already crossed the Sutledge thrice, and without suffering any considerable losses, had destroyed numbers of the imperialists. Their activity in the field was wonderful. They flew after their audacious leader like an army of spirits over the plains, their rapidity of movement placing them beyond the reach of every arrow, javelin, or matchlock, that was directed against them. The Sutledge was filled with sand-banks in the

neighbourhood of their position, which rendered it easily fordable even to infantry.

For the fourth time, Man-Singh gave the signal for another charge, when the whole body, lance in hand, rushing through the river, rode, with their usual chivalry, against the first body of troops they met, who, being prepared for the encounter, sustained the shock with more firmness than Man-Singh had expected. His followers hurled their lances at the foe, and then relying on the scymitar, dealt such hot destruction around them, that the immediate retreat of their opponents seemed to have little in it of a feigned character. The Rajaputs pursued them.

Meanwhile, the division of cavalry concealed behind the eminence, mounting their horses, galloped down to the river, and passing it without resistance, established themselves in the position confided to the Rajaputs; and the train of elephants having moved rapidly to the opposite bank, constituted a living rampart, through which it was impossible for any force to penetrate.

Chusero, whose eye at once discovered the

snare, in which the excessive and undisciplined ardour of the Rajaputs had involved them, joined Hussein without delay, and the two divisions attacking the enemy, drove them back into the river. But Bochari, prepared for this, had already despatched to their support a body of light artillery, mounted on camels. The fire of the guns, passing over the heads of his troops, speedily repelled the masses of infantry brought against them; directing the line of the elephants to open, a dense body of cavalry hastened through the passage into the river, and gaining the opposite bank, under a terrible fire from the matchlocks, recaptured the enemy's position.

Man-Singh, returning with his Rajaputs, found, to his dismay, the passage walled up by an enormous crowd of elephants. The men stationed in the towers, opened upon him a terrible fire, while a fresh division of cavalry attacking him on the other side, he found himself enclosed within the very jaws of the demon of battle. But his spirit flinched not from the conflict. The fury of his Rajaputs was capable of any thing he could call upon them to perform. Turning back upon the enemy, he

resolved to cut his way through them, though closing on him in masses that seemed to offer no chance of escape. Nevertheless, with his single sabre, he clove down horse and rider, until he forced a path, which being made wider behind him by the indomitable valour of his companions, they drove through the dense assemblage, like a wedge riving the oak consolidated by the storms of a thousand winters.

Jehangire, who, mounted on that noble elephant Indragui, watched the events of the day with the utmost diligence, dispatched orders to all the cavalry and camels to take advantage of the passage of the Sutledge, already secured; and such was the speed with which his mandate was obeyed, that before the sun began to decline, the fortune of the day seemed to have crowned his banners with victory. The fire of his artillery was maintained with undiminished intensity; while that of the insurgents, from a failure of ammunition, began to exhibit unequivocal symptoms of decay. The vollies, at first so admirably regular, became less frequent. Gun after gun yielded no new flash. Terror seized the men the moment their supplies were exhausted, and, as the guns were chained to-

gether, they despaired of extricating them from the dangers of capture, to which they were now too evidently exposed. They fled, and in their flight began to diffuse a panic through the field, which would have ended the battle, had it not been restored by Afkun.

Abandoning a position, the defence of which was no longer of any consequence, he advanced to the assistance of Chusero and Hussein, who were in engagement with the enemy. The infantry, elephants, and camels of the imperialists, crossing the river at all the fords without any farther difficulty, forthwith proceeded to take an active part in the battle, which now became general. The artillery was for a while silenced on both sides; and, as the smoke in which the field had been involved the whole day, cleared off into the higher regions of the atmosphere, clouds of arrows were seen to take its place, spreading over the combatants a canopy of iron.

At one moment forests of spears glittered in the sun. Then levelled against each other, the masses by whom they were wielded appearing rising and falling like the waves of the ocean—now tending in one direction—now in

another. Again the spears were raised, as the forces on either side gave way—but red with gore—and flourished amid shouts of triumph, mingled with the cries of wounded men and dying horses, agonizing even to ears best inured to the din of war. Afkun, Hussein, and Chusero, it was universally admitted, exhibited incessantly prodigies of valour. But the ill-directed ardour of Man-Singh had disconcerted the whole of their plans; their men fell around them, overwhelmed by numbers. Their artillery was not only captured, but in a very short time turned against them by the imperialists. The elephants trod them down. The flying artillery pressed upon them, wherever an attempt was made to offer further resistance. Nevertheless, it was not until Hussein fell, gashed by a hundred sabres, that Afkun, seeing the day irrecoverably lost, exerted all his remaining energy to extricate the prince from the perils, against which he had no longer any power to contend; and prevailing upon the ill-fated youth to mount behind him on his charger, withdrew from the field of slaughter.

CHAPTER XI.

Treading disdainfully

Upon our very throats, he echoed back
Our clamorous shouts of triumph with defiance,
And laughed all threats and stratagems to scorn.

HINDOO DRAMA.

CHUSERO, and his brave companion in calamity, wandered all night through the woods, uncertain as to the direction in which they were proceeding. Towards morning they discovered a wretched hut, loosely covered with dried branches and withered leaves. Permitting their horse to take such food as he could find in such a spot, they laid themselves down to rest, and slept until noon, when Afkun, awaking to the dreadful recollection of the events of the preceding day, pressed both his hands on his forehead, thought of his home, and asked himself

with a sob that almost rent his manly heart, "Ah! what now shall become of my Nourmahal!"

No regrets passed through his mind for having joined the banner of the prince in this war. He felt convinced, from all he had heard of Jehangire, from the well-known habits of his life, from the follies which he had committed, even when on his way to the Sutledge—follies, which of course lost no shade of their original puerility, in the rumours that wafted intelligence of them to all quarters of the empire; but especially from the sallies of downright insanity to which Jehangire was subject, that he was unfit to rule so important an empire as Hindostan.

In summing up and justifying to himself his motives of action, the husband of Nourmahal endeavoured to conceal the consciousness, that he had also committed his destinies in the prince's cause, from a vague, yet always increasing apprehension, that there were strong, perhaps indissoluble, though invisible links of affection between her and Jehangire, which must, sooner or later, draw them too closely together. And yet it was,

perhaps, this feeling which, more than any other, determined him, in the first moments of the civil war, to choose the side he had taken. He knew not to what courses the reckless and malignant Bochari might instigate the emperor, if he reached the northern provinces, borne on the tide of victory. He feared the passions of the sovereign, now no longer checked by the prohibitions of Acbar, or awed by the authority of Fazeel.

Looking at the intelligent and chivalrous youth slumbering by his side, covered with the gore and dust of battle, in which, though defeated, he bore a part worthy of the valour of Baber, he felt more and more attached to him. Placing his left hand on the prince's shoulder, and raising the other to the skies, he swore never to desert him; and even if he could not promote him to the throne, for which he was so well fitted by nature, at all events to acknowledge no other master, to the last moment of his existence.

Afkun had awoke feverish and thirsty. He saw, by the flushed cheek and brow, that his companion was equally so; and hearing, as he thought, a gurgling sound at some distance, he

went out to search for the place whence it came. He soon lighted on a little brook, whose clear waters were singing their way over a bed of pebbles and through fallen leaves, little conscious of the tremendous scenes that had just been enacted upon the banks of the river, to which haply they were about to offer their slender tribute. Stooping down, he drank copiously of the refreshing stream; then taking off his helmet, he filled it with the transparent element, and laid it beside the prince, who, just opening his eyes, looked around, wondering where he was. The affectionate pressure of Afkun's hand answered all his inquiries, and a draught of the pure cold spring at once restored to his features their wonted expression.

Chusero and his companion agreed that their only resource would be to proceed at once to Lahore, which, being well fortified and powerfully garrisoned, would enable them to hold out against the enemy, until the late disasters could be in some measure repaired, and a new army organized. With this view Afkun went in search of his horse, which was nowhere to be seen. Venturing to call aloud to the animal,

certain, that if within the reach of his voice it would immediately answer to his appeal, three or four men started at the sound from beneath branches of trees, with which they had covered themselves. They turned out to be soldiers of Cashmere, who had fled thither, like himself, from the field of battle, and whose delight was inexpressible on finding that their leader had also escaped unhurt from the perils of the disastrous day. They immediately went in different directions to look for their chieftain's well-known steed, which they found at some distance, feeding on the leaves of a tamarisk. The whole party then proceeded through the forest, directing their course by the sun, westward.

After emerging from the forest, they were joined, from time to time, by other fugitives from the late scene of contest, who informed them that the emperor's army was already moving, with great rapidity, towards Lahore. The unwelcome tidings also reached them, that Man-Singh, notwithstanding his astonishing feat in cutting his way through the ranks of the enemy, had been made prisoner, and ordered to be confined in the fortress of Gwalior; and that Bochari, with three thou-

sand chosen men, had set out expressly in pursuit of the prince, whom he had strict injunctions to convey, dead or alive, to the presence of the emperor. Chusero resolved to sell his freedom only with his life, for he knew that so long as Bochari controlled the councils of his father, one would be just as valueless to him as the other.

Subsisting upon such wild berries and fruits, as the trees and shrubs they found on their way, furnished; or, upon the provisions supplied to them by the hospitable peasants, at whose huts they claimed the assistance seldom denied in Hindostan to travellers; the prince and his friend, attended by their followers, arrived in the course of a few days on the banks of the Rawee, a deep and rapid river, which it would be impossible for them to pass, unless at some of the ferries, where boats were established at the expense of government. A boy whom they met with, driving some swine, conducted them to the nearest ferry; but although the passage was much frequented, no boats were to be found. Afkun proceeded alone to the next village, where the ferryman lived, and learned from him, that orders had been already received

by the zemindar of the district, from the imperial army, to stop all the passages of the Rawee, and that, in compliance with those orders, the boats had been secreted.

Upon returning to the prince, Afkun proposed to take measures for compelling the ferryman to disclose the place where the boats were concealed. "We have," said he, "it is true, but a small force—in all, I think, not exceeding a hundred men, but their quivers are not wholly exhausted, their zeal may be relied upon, and we have no time for deliberation." It was then near midnight. Proceeding to the village, they took the ferryman out of his bed, and threatened to tie a large stone round his neck and throw him into the river, unless he forthwith complied with their demand. He declared that the mandate of the zemindar had been executed, not by him, but by the villagers, as he happened to be at some distance fishing, when the orders arrived. They then proceeded to seize the villagers, whose huts he pointed out. Some were taken in their beds—others escaping, by their outcries alarmed the country. The ferry-boats were nowhere to be found. Two of his followers, whom Afkun had

taken the precaution to send down the river to see if, in any of the creeks, the boats had been concealed, returned to him at day-break, with intelligence that two rafts, loaded with wood, were tied to a tree at a distance below the village. Hastening with the prince and his followers to the spot, they speedily disencumbered the rafts of their burthen, and, crowding on board, began to put across the stream. They had scarcely quitted the bank, when the zemindar, being roused from sleep by the tumult, presented himself, attended by his guards and a concourse of the people, and having in vain ordered the rafts to be brought back, fired upon the navigators. They returned the fire with their arrows, one of which transfixed the zemindar, others wounded his guards and the people, who, irritated by the circumstance, plunged into the river, and surrounding the rafts, endeavoured to sink them. Some were pierced with arrows in the attempt, others had their hands cut off. In the confusion the paddles were lost, by which the rafts had hitherto been conducted. The fugitives were therefore obliged to allow themselves to be borne down the current.

Chusero and Afkun immediately divested themselves of their armour, with a view to swim to the farther bank, though the Rawee exhibited a considerable expanse at that place, and appeared to widen at every step. Meanwhile, a strong body of the imperial guards made their appearance, led on by Bochari, who, perceiving his prey ready to escape, jumped into the ferry-boat, which was just launched from a neighbouring creek, where it had been hauled up, and with a few followers, proceeded at once towards the raft, where he saw the prince and Afkun ready to dive into the stream. Bochari, also, had left off his armour, in consequence of the heat of the weather, and the rapidity with which he was eager to travel. Afkun, observing the foe whom he had in vain often attempted to discover in the field of battle, felt new life rushing through his nerves, and entreating the prince to save his life by hastening to the distant bank, lifted him on his steed, and pushing the animal into the water, waited the approach of the ferry-boat as the rock expects the coming wave, whose utmost fury it disdains.

Both the warriors instinctively drew their scy-

mitars at the same moment, and as the boat, impelled by the oar and the current, passed the raft, the two weapons met with a clash which flung a blaze of light upon the water. The men on either side hung back, as if in the presence of such chieftains they had no right to take a share in the conflict.

The impetuosity with which the boat was urged drove it against a sand bank, where it adhered. The raft was in a few moments at its stern, and Afkun, ordering his men to board the boat and sink her, if they could, grappled with Bochari. The latter, feeling his arm held back by somebody behind him, made an effort to extricate himself, and in doing so, fell over the side of the vessel. Afkun seized him by the shoulder, and pulling him on to the raft, gave him time to get erect upon his legs. Again the two scymitars flashed against each other, each of the combatants feeling, that in that moment, the fate of the empire was in his hands, and that he had no means of safety except in his own prowess. The advantage, at first, seemed in favour of Afkun, who, scarcely allowing Bochari any time for parrying his blows, laid

upon him as if he were about to cleave him in two.

The Persian, however, gradually finding his footing on the raft, threw up the weapon of the Turcoman by a dexterous understroke, and stooping, wheeled round to the other side, where he placed himself in an attitude of defence that drew forth applause even from the rival parties in the boat, and suspended their contest. Both raft and boat were now entangled in the sand-bank, the current driving them through it with a force which they could not master.

Afkun again advanced upon his foe, who, holding his scymitar before him, watched the coming blow with admirable coolness, and rendered it ineffectual, without attempting to return it. He felt the power of the gigantic arm against which he had hazarded his life, and looked only to the resources of his ingenuity to exhaust that strength, or at least to reduce it to his own level. But the Turcoman was not there for the play of the gladiator, with which he was little conversant. He repeated his onsets, until finding himself baffled by the vigilance of his antagonist, he turned his scymitar in his hand, and striking that of

Bochari with the back of his weapon, sent more than the half of it ringing into the stream. Then flinging his own blade after it, he closed at once upon his dismayed opponent, grasping him in his arms as the bear of Gundwana compresses the panther when they meet over the same spoil, threatened to annihilate him, and would probably have accomplished his purpose, if the raft, over-balanced by their united weight, had not inclined to one side, when both fell headlong into the foaming current.

The combatants disappeared ; but in a few moments their heads were seen above the water, at a short distance below the boat, struggling for breath, Afkun still holding Bochari powerless in one of his muscular arms, while with the other he endeavoured to stem the rapidity of the tide. The contest was no longer equal. The cavalry on the banks witnessed the danger in which their chief was involved, but afraid to fire while the antagonists were thus closely linked together, they procured another boat, and hastened to Bochari's assistance. Afkun, still stemming his way to the further bank, plunged repeatedly with his burden in the depths of the river, and it was not until he saw the second

boat push forth from the shore, and quickly gaining upon him, that diving once more, he returned to the surface alone.

The boatmen gave up Bochari as lost, when the soldiers in the vessel, levelling their matchlocks at Afkun, sent forth a shower of balls that ploughed the waters around him. But like the noble stag, even when hard pressed by dogs and hunters in full pursuit, he held on his way in stately pride, not looking once behind him, and urging his limbs with unquailing energy through the flood, now that he could use them without incumbrance, soon left the boat at a distance whence their fire was of no avail, until touching the shelving bank, he strode it up like a god emerging from his own dominion.

Bochari re-appeared a few moments after, and was taken into the boat, in a condition so feeble that he was at first supposed to be lifeless. But being conveyed to the shore with the least possible delay, he was stripped of all his garments, and covered with hot sand, while the soles of his feet were rubbed with heated oil. The flickering embers of existence were thus gradually retained and strengthened, the glow came back to his pallid cheek, and his arms

were again seen beating the air, as if he were still engaged in the deadly strife from which he had just been rescued. From that moment he never heard the name of Afkun repeated, without feeling his frame incased in the icy shroud of death.

The Turcoman's first anxiety was to know what had become of the prince. Nor was he long condemned to doubt upon that subject; while, having ascended an eminence, he was still hesitating as to the direction in which he should bend his steps, his beauteous steed, much soiled with mud, came trotting towards him, neighing with delight for having recovered its master. Looking along the bank whence the animal had come, he perceived Chusero, and ran forward eagerly to meet him. The prince related, that having escaped with no small difficulty from the eddies of the Rawee, in which he was for some time involved, he lost sight of the rafts altogether, but that, keeping his way, as soon as he reached the land, along the river he heard the discharge of fire-arms. He was at no loss to conjecture at whom they were directed, and galloped on with all speed until, without suspecting it, he entered a morass, where

his horse sunk instantly to the saddle. He threw himself off; the animal, with instinctive foresight of its peril, swaying on its side, rolled over, and thus extricating its limbs, cautiously retraced its steps, until it found a firm footing. At that moment Afkun's well-known figure presented itself upon the rising ground.

A brook, which formed one of the tributaries of the Rawee, enabled them to cleanse the animal, who stood with joyous tranquillity in the stream, while they applied the element to his limbs. Then mounting on his back, and following the guidance of the river, they rode onward night and day until they reached the gates of Lahore, which they found closed, and vigilantly guarded, on account of the rumoured approach of the imperial troops. The prince, on demanding admission, was at once recognised by the sentinels, and entering the city, was every where received with enthusiastic acclamations, notwithstanding his recent disaster. The promises of fidelity made to him by the garrison and the inhabitants, were renewed. They swore that they would defend the town to the last; for besides the obligation they had already contracted towards the prince, they apprehended from the

mode in which the emperor, at the instigation of Bochari, dealt with the prisoners who had fallen into his hands, that they were to expect no mercy; that the town, if unfortunately captured, would be given up to the pillage of the imperial troops; that neither sex, nor age would be spared; and that of the city itself not one stone would be permitted to remain upon another.

CHAPTER XII.

Watchmen ! what of the night ?

Fearful noises come from the camp, my lord.

HINDOO DRAMA.

NOR were the rumours of the imperial wrath meditated to be inflicted upon Lahore, nor of the terrible cruelties practised upon the prisoners, by the orders of Bochari, exaggerated. The captive chieftains of the insurgent force, who had not died of their wounds, were condemned to various punishments, distinguished from each other, according to the rank of the sufferers, by refinements of torture, which the genius of Bochari had invented. Some were impaled, some flayed alive, some condemned to wear

wooden yokes, and perform menial services for the lowest followers of the army; while others were thrown into the dens of wild beasts for food, or trampled to death by the elephants.

Such of the unhappy men as had not been able to make their escape from the rafts and boats on the river, during the conflict between Bochari and Afkun, were reserved for the special vengeance of the Persian. It was said that he had resolved to cut them limb from limb with his own hand, but that through the interposition of the emperor, they were only drawn through the river until they were nearly suffocated, and that then they were suspended from the branches of trees with their heads downwards.

The spectacle of these punishments, instead of shaking the fidelity of the troops, in whose presence they were conducted, served to animate them with fresh ardour for the attack which they were about to make upon Lahore. They were informed that the public treasures, accumulated in the vaults of the citadel, were incalculable; that the wealth of the nobles and merchants, resident within the walls, was, of itself, sufficient to enrich every individual in the army; that the

granaries and stores overflowed with provisions of every kind, and that all these they should be at liberty to distribute amongst themselves, if they should succeed in capturing the town. They received the official license for universal plunder with shouts that rent the air, and called upon the emperor to lead them without delay against the devoted walls, within which all the available resources of the insurrection were supposed to be now concentrated.

Bochari passed through the lines, borne on an elephant, and further gave orders, for which he had not received the sanction of Jehangire, that when they entered Lahore, as he had no doubt they would do triumphantly, they should put to death every man they met, armed or unarmed; that they should drive into the temples the women and children, fling combustibles amongst them, and sacrifice them to the just anger of the violated laws. The captor, he added, who should bring him Afkun alive, should, besides receiving ten elephant loads of gold, be appointed viceroy of the best province of the empire. If he could not be taken alive, the amount of gold just mentioned would

be given for the head of that arch leader of the rebellion.

These communications were every where listened to with shouts of "Long live Bochari!" which resounded through the whole army, as if the war were henceforth to have for its principal object the gratification of the implacable resentment excited in the breast of that commander, by the disgrace he had suffered from the hands of Afkun, in the presence of the imperial guards.

The troops having arrived, by forced marches, within a short distance of Lahore, proceeded, without delay, to establish their lines. Their camp was pitched immediately behind a forest, which extended on both sides of the Rawee to the north and east of the town, around which they posted strong detachments, resolved, if they could not take it by storm, to effect the destruction of the besieged by the more tardy process of blockade. As soon as they could plant their artillery in a favourable position, they opened a fire upon four of the twelve gates by which the walls were divided; but having been defended on the outside by large bundles of brambles chained together, the discharges produced no effect.

Frequent attempts were made on the part of the besiegers to set fire to these external defences ; soldiers, tempted by large sums of money, ran forward with lighted torches for the purpose, but they were vigorously repulsed by matchlock-men, who, sallying from small door-ways in the walls, met them half way, and cut them down as fast as they approached. Women and children were seen pouring down water upon the brambles, to protect them from the burning missiles hurled from a distance.

The imperial artillery next directed their guns against those portions of the walls, extending between the towers, with a view to effect breaches, through which storming parties might attempt to effect an entrance. But the walls having been of great thickness, and bulwarked on the inside by mounds of earth raised against them, the largest balls which the besiegers could use rebounded, without causing the slightest impression on those massive ramparts.

Meanwhile the guns of the citadel, as well as those planted on the outer walls and towers, poured an incessant fire upon the assailants, which, being steadily directed under the orders of Afkun, produced considerable havoc amongst

the imperialists, and prevented them from establishing any posts within the nearer points which they had intended to occupy. Rockets and grenades issuing from the citadel, as well as from the imperial camp, constantly crossed each other in the sky, producing through the night especially, a fearful illumination. Occasionally houses in the town were set on fire by these messengers of destruction, but the river being at hand, and numbers of the inhabitants being prepared with buckets, especially set apart for that service, the conflagrations were subdued almost as soon as they commenced.

In the middle of the second night of the siege, the whole garrison was thrown into alarm, by an enormous explosion, which took place in the citadel. The inhabitants all ran out from their houses, which were shaken to the foundation. At first the universal impression was, that an earthquake had taken place, and that the hopes of the besiegers were already accomplished by the interposition of that most awful of all auxiliaries. But when, amidst the coruscations, which threw a lurid flame through the skies, they beheld fragments of human beings scattered in all directions, some

without heads, some without arms, here shapeless trunks, there mutilated limbs, intermixed with domestic utensils, broken beams of wood, bricks and stones, which immediately fell to the earth again amidst cries of woe that rent the air, they concluded that some of the magazines of powder had either by accident, or by treachery, been ignited, and that the enemy were already rushing in upon them in overwhelming numbers.

Instead of hastening to the ramparts, whither the dictates of duty would have directed them, lamentable to relate, the mob collected by this catastrophe, precipitated themselves upon the quarter of the citadel where the houses were in ruins, and murdering every body who offered any resistance, proceeded to plunder the habitations thus exposed to their atrocious thirst for gold. The efforts of the prince to check the banditti in their rage for prey of any kind, would have been fatal to him, had not Afkun, with a select body of troops, arrived at a seasonable moment to his assistance. Attacking the ruthless crowd sword in hand, he hewed them down, until some pieces of artillery, which he had ordered to follow him, were ranged across the street they had occupied. Then sud-

denly retiring behind the guns, he applied the match himself to the cannon that was nearest to him. Upon this signal being given, the whole street was swept in a few minutes of the infamous offenders, who sought to avail themselves of the confusion of such a scene, to spread wider, for their own benefit, the havoc already too extensive.

The besieging army, startled from sleep by the explosion that had taken place in the citadel, and the tumult by which it was followed, ignorant of the real cause of the firing which they heard, assumed at once that the garrison had made a nocturnal attack upon the camp, and prepared to defend themselves with all possible expedition. They were, however, soon apprised, by their sentinels, that the firing was altogether within the walls.

Bochari was already mounted on his charger, and in council with the emperor, who was also mounted, and surrounded by his staff. The Persian then disclosed the fact, that he had succeeded in opening a communication with a powerful party within the town (by which he meant fifty omrahs, whom he had found means to corrupt by largesses and promises of im-

mense plunder), that it must have been through their instrumentality the powder-magazine, in the citadel, had been ignited ; but that, unfortunately, they had done their appointed work prematurely, as it was his intention that it should not take place until the next night, when the army was to be prepared to follow it up by a general assault upon the town.

“ It is not yet too late,” said Jehangire, “ to turn what has occurred to our advantage. Have the torches been distributed ?”

“ They have not,” answered Bochari ; “ but I shall see that done, if your majesty will, in the mean time, ride through the camp, and give the requisite orders for an immediate march upon the walls.”

The emperor, adopting Bochari's suggestion, rode through the lines, where he found the men very generally on the alert ; and after directing that their pay should be doubled, ordered that they should close upon the walls with a light but rapid pace, and in the most profound silence. Torch-bearers were sent forward, by the care of Bochari, to the foot of the walls, where the assault was intended to be made ; but with strict orders not to kindle the flambeaus until

the ladders, which he had also despatched, were erected.

These preparations were completed by the time the banditti had been dispersed in the citadel, and a body of upwards of twenty thousand men were already within an arrow's flight of the walls, on the Delhi side, when the sentinels on the ramparts, whose attention had been hitherto engrossed by the events occurring in the citadel, imagined that they heard an unusual sound beneath them. Attributing it to the consequences of the explosion, and apprehending no danger from the enemy, they were slow to take the alarm.

Afkun, however, when he saw that the banditti were about to be disposed of in the way they deserved, anticipating a combined movement on the part of the besiegers, to whose machinations he at once attributed the explosion of the magazine, apprised the prince of his suspicions, and suggested to him the expediency of an immediate inspection of the ramparts. Chusero went in one direction, while Afkun proceeded in another. It was the fortune of the latter to visit the walls on the Delhi side; when hearing, from the sentinels, a re-

port of the low noises that had just reached their ears, he instantly desired them to fire in that direction. The fire remained unreturned ; but as the murmur without seemed to approach nearer, Afkun ordered the trumpets to sound to arms.

In a few moments the garrison were all out ; but before they could take their stations on the ramparts, a thousand torches flung their light upon as many ladders, up which men were crowding with desperate courage. Some of the assailants had already surmounted the walls, and were in conflict with the sentinels, who were almost all slain upon the spot.

Afkun leading on the first company of the garrison, which he could embody for the purpose, ran against them with such impetuosity, that most of those to whom he was opposed were precipitated over the ramparts. This check, however, did not repress the continued lines of men, who were seen ascending rapidly as far as the eye could reach.

Chusero, on the other hand, hearing the alarm, placed himself at the head of a large body of troops, and, hastening towards the Delhi gate, perceived that all the danger was

in that quarter. He was immediately in the thick of the assailants, who fought with the most undaunted valour. It was difficult at such a moment, the night being intensely dark, to distinguish between friend and foe; but Afkun calling the prince to him, suggested that they should let the enemy, already on the walls, rush on; in the mean time direct the attention of the garrison only to the men who were ascending the ladders, and occupy the ramparts in that direction with masses, through which it would be impossible for any reinforcement to penetrate. This suggestion being carried into immediate execution, he, with a handful of men, went in pursuit of those who had already entered the town. He found them, as he expected, hastening down to the Delhi gate, with a view to open it to their friends. Attacking them sword in hand, he drove them before him through the narrow street leading to that gate, where, for nearly an hour, the conflict was maintained on either side with an energy which no efforts seemed to exhaust.

The imperialists being nearest to the gate, Afkun urged his men to cut their way at all

hazards through the enemy, in order to reach the gate before it could be opened. His soldiers gallantly exerted themselves to fulfil his orders ; but so densely wedged within the narrow way were their adversaries, that it became impossible for them to penetrate the living rampart.

Chusero having succeeded in stopping the tide of the assailants, directed the men on the ramparts, on either side of the Delhi gate, to pour down their fire upon the enemy in the street, and also upon the masses prepared on the outside to enter, the moment the gate should be unbarred. But no danger—no slaughter, seemed to divert the imperialists from their object. The enormous bolts of the gate were already drawn back ; the chains drawn across it were heard falling ; the masses without were pressing onwards with a force that seemed irresistible, when Afkun, climbing up the rampart, leaped down in the space which the enemy had cleared with difficulty, in order to let the gate be opened ; and placing his back against the iron bars, by which it was still defended, he repelled the assailants.

Chusero lost no time in following his example. A few noble and faithful followers

were instantly by their side, and the attack, being all at once renewed against the enclosed enemy in front, on both sides, and in the rear, not a man escaped to tell the emperor, how fearlessly they persevered in their resolution to die or to accomplish the object he had entrusted to their valour.

The assault of the imperialists having thus failed, those who were outside the walls retired in good order. When the morning came, the space between their lines and the ramparts presented a terrible array of victims, sacrificed to the crude plans of Jehangire and his commander. Soon after the sun had risen, a cavalry-officer was seen riding towards the walls, with his shield upon his back. He was, therefore, permitted to approach; and, having signified, that he was commissioned to propose a truce of three days, in order that the dead should be removed, and burned, with the honours due to their gallantry, the proposition was immediately acceded to by the prince, who was glad to have some interval of repose, in order to repair and guard against a recurrence of the disaster, which had placed the citadel in so much danger.

CHAPTER XIII.

“ What ho? beware! In youthful strength and sport,
The tiger, in the temple’s porch confined,
Has burst his iron cage, and roams at large;
With tail high waving, like a banner, vast
And mighty limb, he stalks among the groves.
From his deep throat he roars in thunder loud,
And men and beasts fly trembling from the echo;
Look to your lives—as best you may avoid him.”

HINDOO DRAMA.

SONGS of triumph, aided by pipe and timbrel, acclamations and expressions of boundless joy, greeted Afkun wherever, in the performance of his duties, he moved through Lahore. Crowds of the people watched for his approach, assembled before the house in which he resided, or sought him out on the ramparts, in order to testify by their applause the gratitude which

they owed him as their deliverer from the two-fold perils, by which the safety of the town had been menaced on the preceding night. No language, they very truly declared, could exaggerate the praises which he had earned, no reward could adequately compensate the heroic actions which he had performed on that eventful night; and they one and all hailed him as future viceroy of the province, should the fortune of war ultimately enable them to destroy the forces against which they had to contend.

Afkun, in the few and modest words of a soldier, thanked the people for the honours they conferred upon him. "He had adopted," he said, "the cause of their prince, from a feeling that he was thereby serving the best interests of the empire; and having so determined the line of his duties, he had only to execute them to the best of his ability. He fully depended on the loyalty, and zeal, and bravery of the garrison and inhabitants, but he warned them that treason was secretly at work, which, unless it were actively watched and resisted, might, notwithstanding all their exertions, deprive them of the fruits of the victory which they had already achieved.

The prince appointed the second day of the truce to hold his court in the splendid palace of the citadel, in order to receive the congratulations of the nobility and merchants, the officers and regiments of the garrison, and the great mass of the people of Lahore, upon the auspicious events which had, to a great degree, repaid him for the calamitous results of the battle on the Sutledge. It was to be a day of universal rejoicing throughout the city, but by the prudent precautions of Afkun provision was made, that no relaxation of discipline should take place on the ramparts, so as to afford to the enemy any chance of advantage during the festival. He had no faith, he declared, in the honour of the man who, unhappily, held Jehangire under his absolute control. If Bochari could find an opening by night or day into Lahore, he would pay no regard whatever to the truce, and the only sure way of causing it to be strictly observed, was to preserve the strictest vigilance at all the assailable points.

The morning was ushered in by a salute of artillery from the citadel, and by peals of trumpets from all the regiments of the garrison, who were drawn out upon the ramparts arrayed

in their best attire. The omrahs and wealthy inhabitants were seen moving from all quarters of the town in their palanquins, or mounted on splendidly caparisoned horses or elephants, towards the palace, where they were received by the prince, seated on a jewelled throne. In order to pay peculiar honour to Afkun, it was arranged that fifty of the nobles should attend him on foot from his residence—a large mansion near the Delhi gate—to the citadel, in processional order, and that his palanquin should be borne by them in turn. Afkun would have very much preferred, soldier-like, to have mounted his horse and proceeded, without any show, to the palace; he did not much relish the over-eager zeal in his favour which some of the omrahs about to attend him had exhibited, and who, had he listened to their flattering proposals, would have exalted him in a triumphal car, or rather in a kind of golden cage, which they had decorated for the purpose. The time, however, pressed, and ascending a palanquin, the procession marched forward, followed by an immense crowd of the people, who kept up an incessant shouting as they passed through the streets leading to the citadel.

It happened, as the procession turned the corner of a narrow street, that they met a train of elephants, apparently on their way to the Rawee for a supply of water. The driver urged them forward, without any regard to the crowd before him. Two or three persons had been already trodden to death. The elephants were still goaded on. The procession was thrown into confusion, the palanquin was overturned, and the noble bearers were obliged to fly to save their lives. Afkun, perceiving the danger in which he was involved, drew a short sword, which always hung by his side, and striking the first elephant he met across the root of the trunk, he cut it off at one blow. The animal, turning from him, fell down with an appalling roar, and expired. He then directed the drivers to go back by the way they came, adding that if they did not forthwith obey his orders, he would slay them on the spot. The men, terrified by the unparalleled exhibition of strength which they had just witnessed, were too happy to be allowed to escape on the proposed condition, and the street having been cleared of what many thought to be a premeditated interruption, Afkun, attended only by the people, walked to

the palace, where he was received by the vast assemblage already collected, with repeated shouts of exultation, and a royal salute from the guns in the battery. Chusero, rising from his throne, placed the warrior on the highest step, amidst the renewed acclamations of the court and the people.

The whole garrison under arms then passed in review before the prince, with his banners flying, and their drums, and cymbals, and various musical instruments, playing martial airs, to which the people occasionally added the swelling chorus of their triumphant shouts, as the different regiments, especially those which had most distinguished themselves in resisting the late assault of the enemy, appeared in the brilliant line.

When the review was over, the prince was informed that the authorities of the town had prepared a combat of wild beasts to celebrate the day, and that the animals were already about to enter the arena. Chusero, attended by Afkun and the court, immediately adjourned to the amphitheatre of the palace, where those entertainments were usually held. It was an

immense circular edifice open to the heavens, with benches of solid marble ranged all round, capable of affording seats to upwards of twenty thousand spectators. The arena was enclosed within a circle of strong wooden palisades, high enough, as it was thought, to prevent any animal, however powerful in limb or enraged by passion, from leaping over it, and endangering the lives of any of the spectators.

The amphitheatre was crowded to the top with every order of the inhabitants. The twelve doors of the arena having been all at once thrown open, a host of wild beasts rushed forward instantly from the dark dens behind them, and meeting in the centre, overthrew, or were overthrown by those they met, in their first impetuous exercise of the freedom allowed them. Like insane creatures, they pursued each other round the arena, taking no notice whatever of the multitude of human beings gazing down upon them from all sides. Panthers, jackals, lions, tigers, bears, wolves, immense antelopes, wild horses, bulls, hyenas, wild dogs, caracals, and buffaloes, were seen in terrible confusion attacking or resisting, pursuing or pursued,

each foaming with anger, and uttering in its peculiar cry the sensations of fear, or the impulses of hunger, by which it was actuated.

The horses were soon ripped open by the horns of the wild bulls. The prostrate animals became immediately the prizes for which not only the bulls, but the lions, tigers, dogs, and wolves, contended. The battle was fought with terrible fury. Several of the beasts crouched away from the scene, and waited the result, as if they expected to be the next victims themselves. The horses were torn piecemeal, limb from limb; and as each unsatiated fighter returned for a fresh supply, the combat was renewed with augmented energy. The floor of the arena torn up, streamed with blood. It was sometimes altogether hidden from the spectators by the clouds of dust, which rolled upwards in thick volumes.

The larger animals, at length enfeebled by the loss of blood, from the wounds which they inflicted on each other, or exhausted by the efforts which they made in self-defence, lay down in different parts of the arena; while the lesser beasts crept out from their lurking places, with a stealthy trembling pace, to snatch a por-

tion of the fragments which still remained undevoured. From these enjoyments they were speedily scared by an enormous tiger, who rushed forth, fresh from one of the dens, having been manifestly reserved for the conclusion of the exhibition. There was no antagonist to meet him in the arena. A voice cried out, "Who, among you, will advance singly, and attack this tiger?"

The omrahs, on the benches of the nobles, looked on each other in silence. The people all turned their eyes on Afkun, at once fearful lest, by accepting the challenge, he should expose to danger a life so precious to them at that moment, and yet confident that he would not suffer his valour to be doubted by permitting such a question to pass unanswered.

Three omrahs—three of the very men who had fled from his palanquin, when it was overturned on his way to the palace, starting from their seats, proclaimed their readiness, with the prince's permission, to try their strength successively against the raging animal, who had already caused considerable alarm, by attempting to leap the barrier. In one of his springs, he actually gained the top of the pali-

sade; but losing his footing, he fell backward. Another bound might be more successful; his destruction became necessary to the safety of the assembly.

The proposal of the omrahs touched the pride of Afkun. They called for the long swords which the gladiators generally used on such occasions, and the first of them was apparently about to descend into the arena, when the Turcomanian, who had derived his title from his celebrated victory over a lion in his early youth, spoke out.

“To attack an animal with weapons,” said he, “is both unmanly and unfair. God has given to man limbs and sinews, as well as to tigers: he has added reason to the former to conduct his strength.”

The omrahs objected, “that all men were inferior to the tiger in strength, and that he could be conquered only by steel.”

“I will convince you of your mistake,” replied Afkun, who, putting down his sword on the bench, jumped unarmed into the arena.

A cry of terror ran through the whole assembly; but the contest becoming now inevitable, all eyes looked down upon Afkun with

breathless anxiety. The beasts that had lain feverish and fatigued in the arena, awed by the lustre of his countenance, arose, and retiring to the boundary, made way for this new combatant. The tiger alone seemed unappalled. Backing, as far as he could, he couched to the earth, and gazing fiercely upon his adversary, who stood undaunted before him, sprang upon him with dreadful energy. Afkun, holding both his hands clenched firmly before him, repelled the attack, but not without some loss of blood, the foreclaws of the animal having lacerated the fleshy part of his arms. In the rebound, the tiger fell upon his side. The Turcomanian, well experienced in that species of war, before the animal could recover his position, grasped his hind leg, and turning him on his back, dragged him thrice round the arena, the infuriated creature vainly exerting its utmost power of resistance.

Afkun having thus, in some degree, broken the strength and courage of his antagonist, left him near the barrier. Again the animal couched; but just as he was about to spring, the warrior, taking a slight circuit, ran in upon him with wonderful agility, and struck him with his foot so violently on the left ribs, that

he drove three of them into the intestines. The animal howled with agony, but still unconquered he rose and pursued his foe, who retired, his face towards the beast, until he felt his back against the palisades. The tiger, leaping in the air, rushed upon him with distended jaws. Trembling fears, reaching almost to despair, were pictured in every countenance, with the exception of the three omrahs, who seemed to rejoice in the peril which awaited Afkun. But their hopes were short-lived. Afkun elevated himself above the tiger, grasping an upright of the barrier with one hand, then plunging the other into the foaming gulph beneath him, wrenched the tongue from its roots, as if it were but a sapling, and flung it into the middle of the arena. The tiger fell heavily on the earth, the blood gushing from his mouth, and with a groan, that shook the whole amphitheatre, expired. A peal of joy burst from the multitude, who, rising as one man, unbound their girdles, and waving them over their heads, cheered the victor with louder and louder shouts, while he returned to his seat, his features as calm as if he had only been sporting in the meadows with a gazelle.

The three omrahs looked at each other, pale

and downcast with disappointment. Chusero, who received his friend with open arms, noticed their feelings towards him, but attributed it to envy of such matchless bravery, strength, and skill combined. Others, however, perceived in their conduct, coupled with what had occurred in the morning, a still baser motive—a motive that would have identified them as the purchased agents of Bochari. The authorities of the city having been questioned as to their preparations for such shows, at a moment when the presence of the enemy might well have absorbed their attention in other matters, replied that they knew nothing whatever of the arrangements that had been made for the arena. Suspicions of treachery arose on all sides against the three omrahs, who would doubtless have been sacrificed to the rage of the people, had they not immediately disappeared.

As Afkun was returning to his house from the amphitheatre, a dervish approached him, and warned him to be on his guard, for that designs were entertained against his life, which it would require the strictest caution upon his part to frustrate. The Turcomanian treated the communication with the indifference of a

man to whom the sensation of fear never was known. He was surrounded by no guards—his servants, according to custom, retired at night, each to his own home. After inspecting the ramparts, and desiring that he should be sent for upon the slightest appearance of movement from without, he retired late at night to his couch. He was scarcely asleep, when forty assassins suddenly entered his apartment from an upper room, in which, through the negligence, or co-operation of the porter, they had been enabled to conceal themselves during the early part of the night. Their daggers were about to descend upon him, when, one of the band, a veteran soldier, who had witnessed the battle in the arena, struck with shame, cried out, “Hold ! let us behave like men ! What ? Though we have the imperial orders—though the prize is great—shall forty fall upon one, and that one asleep ?”

“Bravely spoken !” exclaimed Shere, who, on the instant starting from his bed, seized his sword, and placing himself in a corner of the room, awaited the attack of the ruffians. In a few minutes, three of them who rushed in upon him, lay weltering in their blood at his feet.

Several others were wounded—the rest fled in dismay—the veteran soldier excepted, who confessed that they had been hired by the three omrahs to take away his life, and to deliver to them his head, for which they were to receive three elephant loads of gold as their reward. The omrahs, he added, shewed them a proclamation from the emperor, in which an enormous price was set upon his person, living or dead. Shere took him gratefully by the hand, praised him for his generous conduct, and dismissed him with handsome presents, to relate through the town the particulars of what had just occurred.

In the morning, the intelligence of this new attempt, the third that was made in the course of twelve hours, upon the existence of their gallant defender, filled the garrison and inhabitants of Lahore with the greatest indignation. They assembled in crowds before his house, and entreated him to lead them at once against an enemy, whom no feelings of honour, no respect for the laws of war, no veneration for true heroism could prevent from having recourse to base stratagems, unworthy of the lowest race of mankind. Afkun received their expressions of sympathy and admiration with just pride, but

he would disdain, he said, to follow the example of such an enemy, by violating the truce. He would not believe that the proclamation, of which they had heard, was the work of Jehangire. It proceeded, doubtless, from the hand already imbrued in the blood of Fazeel—the most illustrious man whom Hindostan had ever seen.

“May justice strike the murderer!” shouted the multitude.

“Is it to be tolerated,” asked Afkun, “that such a fiend as this should be the ruler of the empire, for he whom that low-born Persian calls emperor, is but a bauble in his hands!”

“Down with Bochari!” they answered: “vengeance on his guilty head—the tyrant—the murderer of Fazeel—the assassin, if he could be, of Afkun!”

CHAPTER XIV.

Dread not though singly he contend with multitudes,
To such as he—odds are of little moment—
He needs no succour but his own right arm,
Resistless as the lion, when delightedly
He rings his clashing claws, and cleaves asunder
The elephant's broad temples.

HINDOO DRAMA.

THE three days of truce demanded, and unhappily obtained by the imperialists, under the pretext of burning their dead, for which as many hours would have been sufficient, were not intended to be spent in idleness. Finding that in Afkun they had no ordinary foe to contend against, that the inhabitants were determined in their resistance, that supplies of provisions did not reach the camp adequate to the wants of so

large an army, and that they would be soon under the necessity of raising the siege, unless some extraordinary measures were adopted, Bochari arranged with omrahs, resident within the walls, with whom he carried on intercourse by means of spies, the several attempts upon Afkun's life, which, however, the indomitable strength and valour of the Turcomanian had defeated.

It is but justice to Jehangire to observe, that when these mean stratagems were hinted or talked of in the council, for they were not made the subject of any discussion or resolution in that body, both he and Auzeem uniformly discountenanced them. But Bochari took every thing upon himself. Whenever he discovered that any plan which he had conceived was likely to meet with resistance, he immediately avoided any further show of carrying it on. Regardless of personal responsibility, he persevered in his own course, whatever it was, acting nevertheless in the name of the emperor, as if he had obtained the assent of Jehangire to all his schemes.

Auzeem felt as strongly as Bochari the necessity of reducing Lahore, or of abandoning

the siege, with all possible expedition. The idea of taking it by storm, after the specimen of resistance the imperialists had already encountered, seemed hazardous in the extreme. Observing, however, that the river Rawee, upon which the inhabitants almost entirely depended for their supply of water, might be diverted from its natural channel, by excavating a passage for it, partly in the forest above the town, partly behind the lines of the beseigers, and permitting it again to enter its own bed at some distance below the walls, Auzeem proposed that during the truce twenty thousand men should be employed in forming a canal for that purpose. The idea was a bold one, and upon a survey of the ground being made, it was found so practicable, that the men were set to work upon it without delay. Their labours having been carried on day and night, not only without interruption, but even without suspicion, on the part of the besieged, the excavation was completed during the night of the third day of the truce.

A canal was formed sufficiently wide and deep to receive the whole volume of the Rawee, nearly a league above Lahore, and to convey it to one of its own tributaries, which entered the

old channel at about the same distance below the town where the descent was so rapid that no danger existed of any part of the water finding its way upwards. It became necessary, however, to throw a dam across the ordinary bed of the river, which was effected by driving stakes into it, and filling the interstices with rocks and hard clay, so as to prevent any portion of the water from making its escape in its wonted direction. This latter operation, however, occupied the besiegers some hours beyond the period of the truce.

The vigilance of Afkun suffered nothing connected with the defence of the town to escape his attention. His preparations for meeting a fresh assault were fully arranged on the morning after the three days had elapsed. As he was crossing the wooden bridge, however, which led over the Rawee, in the middle of Lahore, he observed that the river had fallen considerably below its margin. He mentioned the circumstance to a group of the inhabitants, who happened to be standing on the bridge; but as they did not attach any great importance to the circumstance, attributing it to the heats which had already set in with great violence,

he passed on to the ramparts. His eyes were directed on all sides to the lines of the besiegers ; he found them strongly occupied, but exhibiting no symptoms of a renewal of any thing like a general, or even a partial assault. Nevertheless, he imagined, from the bustle which he occasionally detected beyond the lines, and from the numerous parties which he saw in motion here and there, that operations were in progress either for raising the siege, or for carrying into effect some other purpose, which he could not at the moment divine.

Afkun's suspicions having been excited, he sent for the prince, and, accompanied by him, walked back to the bridge, where he ascertained that the river was still lower than when he first observed it. He immediately ordered the Rawee to be sounded, and having convinced himself that the volume of its waters was rapidly failing, he apprized the people of their danger, and directed them forthwith to bring every vessel they could lay their hands upon, to fill all the reservoirs of the town and citadel, and to be as frugal as possible in their consumption of the vital element, until measures could be taken for

frustrating this new attempt upon the part of the enemy to compel the town to surrender.

The intelligence that the river was somewhere stopped in its course, spread with the rapidity of lightning through all parts of Lahore. The people, alarmed lest they should be deprived of the most essential of all things, especially at such a season, when the sun was raging in the sky, and pouring down its fire upon the town as from a glowing furnace, were seized with an universal panic. Instead of proceeding methodically, as Afkun had directed them, to secure as much of the ebbing stream as they could, while any portion of it remained, they rushed into the channel with their pitchers, and such small earthen vessels as they could carry in their hands, and rendered the water so muddy by their improvident haste, that they destroyed the only chance which they possessed of securing a supply even for the coming night. By noon the river was completely dried up, and when the sun set, the channel was as hardened as the footway of the most frequented street in Lahore.

The slender provision which the inhabitants had thus allowed themselves to make, of an element without which existence could not go on

above a few hours at the utmost, was quickly exhausted, the very fear of losing it having even accelerated its consumption beyond the ordinary proportions. The public fountains were surrounded by multitudes, who, instead of waiting for the regular supply, such as it was, contended with each other in breaking down the marble ornaments, in order to get at the stream within, which was wholly inadequate to their wants.

As the evening advanced, the contests at the wells throughout the town, whether public or private, became dreadful. Mothers, with infants in their arms, and followed by troops of children, fainting for the want of water, fought against each other with a degree of fury which seemed to belong to the region of condemned spirits, for a portion of water that would scarcely fill the hollow of the hand. This when obtained, they gave at once to the infant at the breast, their natural sources having been dried up by the excitement of the scenes in which they were engaged. When the cries of the infants were allayed, those of the other children became still more urgent. They lay upon the earth in piles, most of them unable to express

their wants in any language save that of mournful and incessant wailings, which drove the mothers, already miserable and exhausted by their exertions, to madness. Besides the hostilities which they had to carry on against each other for precedence at the few wells that still yielded a scanty supply, they had soon fiercer enemies, even than their own sex to encounter, in the numerous troops of dogs congregating around them.

Wherever blood was shed, and in many parts of the town it might have been seen in streams all the night, these unfortunate animals, possessing no masters, and accustomed to band together for self-defence, rushed upon the red torrents, which they speedily drank up. Fired by the taste of the grateful liquid, and by the thirst which, on that fatal night, and the greater part of the next day, preyed upon all living creatures within the walls, these rabid outlaws fearlessly attacked every thing that came in their way. The results were awful. The howl of insanity was heard in every direction. Men, women, and children, as if suddenly struck by the sword of the destroying angel, became simultaneously victims of this

new pestilence. They ran up and down the streets, wild with anguish. The inhuman sounds which they uttered—now resembling the barking of blood-hounds—now the fierce cry of the jackall—now the agonizing moan of the wild bull, when stung to the heart by swarms of the gadfly, gave to the other accumulating horrors of the scene so painful a character, that captivity, torture, death itself, seemed preferable to existence in such a place.

Those of the inhabitants who still retained the power to move, collecting in a body, rushed out through one of the gates, along the dry bed of the river, until they arrived at the spot, where it again received the flowing waters. They hastened headlong into the flood. Many were drowned—many drinking too copiously of the element in the midst of the fever, which prevented them from knowing what they did, perished instantly, the vital current being at once repelled from the heart. Those whom the waters did not destroy, were easily overcome by the enemy, who, having assembled in force, attacked and slew them without mercy.

Chusero gave up all hope of retaining the town, under these circumstances. But the re-

solution of Afkun was not so to be subdued. At all events he determined that, if possible, Lahore should not be given up to the mere mercy of the imperialists. Collecting at night the principal part of the garrison, he explained to them that the river must have been intercepted in its course, by a mound thrown across it, somewhere above the town. The forest which lay in that direction, and the works raised by the besiegers, prevented him from ascertaining the precise spot where that mound must have been erected; but the difficulties of the hour admitted of no deliberation. Military weapons were now of no further use. Hatchets, pick-axes, spades, torches, were the only arms of which they stood in need. He appeared himself, equipped with a massive iron club in one hand, and a lighted flambeau in the other, and having already collected from the citadel all the instruments of the kind just mentioned, which it contained, he bade the soldiers take them up and follow him.

The imperialists were on the watch for a movement of this description. They were, therefore, prepared to defend the mound, as well as to take advantage of the opening of the

gate in that direction. Their calculations upon the latter point were foreseen, however, by Afkun. They might have easily penetrated the town in the opposite quarter, had they reached the gate in time, during the rush of the populace to the lower part of the Rawee. But before Afkun quitted the town, he closed that gate with his own hand, and confided the care of the portal, through which he was now about to lead his forlorn hope, to the valour of Chusero.

Out went ten thousand men in the depths of the night, armed only as the Turcomanian had directed, animated by the sufferings they were enduring, to a degree that fitted them to meet any perils. When the last man passed the gate the prince was there to bar it again, and to encourage, by his presence, his patience, and his gallantry, the remnants of the guard that still survived the general calamity. Moving in a solid mass, the followers of Afkun no sooner reached the forest than they lighted their torches, and set fire to the trees. These were chiefly pine, and having been rendered particularly inflammable by the prevalent heats, the whole forest was immediately in conflagration

on both sides of the bed of the Rawee. The men advanced, unflinching, through the blaze, until they arrived near the mound, whence a hundred pieces of artillery were discharged upon them. Their ranks, though ploughed through, still moved on, reckless of all danger. Again the volley was repeated ; but the fevered men heard above its thunder the rushing of the waters, of which they were in search, and hurrying onward with a quickened but steady and resolute pace, attacked the mound with their pick-axes.

In the meantime, the forest burning far and wide, attracted the attention of the besiegers, and filled them with alarm for the safety of the camp, should the wind bear the flame in that direction. Their apprehensions were soon realized. The night breeze from the river blew along the new channel, and carried with it showers of ignited fragments, which fell among the tents and bazaars. All hands were called upon to pull down the tents, many of which were already on fire, or consumed like a scroll of parchment. The army was thrown into confusion. The plans, so well arranged by the council for taking advantage of all probable

movements on the part of the besieged when driven to despair, were rendered of no avail. There was nobody to carry them into effect—all were occupied in looking to their own safety.

Afkun was the first to ascend the mound. Regardless of the gunners, whose office soon became useless, as his surviving followers were already engaged in undermining the dam on which the artillery was planted, he drove his iron mace between two of the stakes, and loosening them, until they yielded to his hand, he pulled them out of the bed of the river as if they were bulrushes. He proceeded, in the same manner, to remove one stake after another, while the pickaxes, spades, and hatchets, resounded along the pile incessantly. His next care was to remove the cannon to the banks of the river, and to point them against the mound. As soon as he saw, by the flames around him, that it was sufficiently weakened, he directed his men to withdraw, and place themselves at the guns which the imperialists had abandoned. A single discharge of the battery was sufficient to shake the wall to its foundation, when the

whole mass, yielding to the pressure of the flood, disappeared.

The joy of these brave men, when they beheld the triumphant result of their labours; the feeling, that to their perishing parents, children, and relatives—to all their partners in calamity—they had been the means of restoring existence, and with it new courage and hope—gave them temperance in the enjoyment of the delicious waters of which they had been so unexpectedly deprived. Under the direction, and the example, of their leader, they at first bathed in the stream—a course by which they found their thirst effectually slaked. They then drank without danger of excess. Thus refreshed, they hastened back to Lahore, where they were received at the dawn of day by all the assembled people, who lavished upon them tokens of admiration for their valour, and of affection for their services, which no rewards could repay.

The banks of the Rawee, within the town, were crowded all the day by the aged men, the matrons, and their children, who remained by its flowing waters, to assure themselves that the intelligence of its return

was no deception. Now that the precaution was no longer necessary, they felt a pleasure in taking to their homes abundant supplies of the copious element; when fatigued with their exertions, they still revisited the stream, carrying with them their mandolins and tabors, to the sounds of which the youths danced and sang; while their happy parents sat in circles around them, as if they were celebrating a festival. When the dance and the song were over, they suspended their instruments upon the dependent branches of the adjacent trees, and slumbered beneath the pleasant shade, or sported with the dimpling tide, until their senses became once more familiarised to its music.

Amidst all the congratulations, however, poured in upon him by the inhabitants, for rescuing them from the horrors which they had lately suffered, Afkun could not conceal from himself the impression, that they were much more apprehensive of a reconstruction of the mound, than of any other disaster which could befall them. Their fears upon that subject, when yielded to for a moment, assumed an appearance of unnatural excitement, blinding all power of judgment, and suppressing every

sentiment of loyalty to him, whose cause now depended chiefly on their allegiance. Of the ten thousand choice men of the garrison, who had sallied out to overthrow the dam, scarcely half the number returned. The havoc made in the garrison, and amongst the able-bodied of the people, by the want of water, during the dreadful days and nights they had just passed, was irreparable.

He was not unapprised of the state of the besieging army—of their want of provisions—of the confusion into which they had been thrown by the firing of the forest, amidst which they were encamped. But the latter evil admitted of a speedy remedy—indeed he saw, by the restoration of the tents, and re-organization of the besieging lines, that the discipline of the imperialists, though for a while endangered, was soon re-established. The deficiency of supplies would urge them to desperate efforts. Should they succeed in capturing the town, their vengeance would be insatiable—the calamities, which the faithful inhabitants had just sustained, would only be exchanged for extermination.

The prince was also fully sensible of the

difficulties, which any attempt to hold the town much longer presented. The control which the imperialists possessed over the Rawee, whenever they might choose to exercise it, was alone sufficient to destroy his hope of permanent success, if he were to confine himself within its walls. His emissaries, moreover, brought him intelligence, that a division of the enemy had received orders to march for Cashmere—his only remaining resource. Should they arrive there before Afkun, the consequences would be fatal. He felt that he owed to the people of Lahore a debt of gratitude, which he could never repay. They had adhered to him under circumstances, such as never before had tested the fidelity of a town besieged. The moment had arrived, he thought, when a capitulation might be obtained upon the most favourable terms; if so, the interests of the inhabitants, which he very much preferred to his own, required that arrangements for that purpose should be made without delay.

Upon communicating with the principal authorities of the town, Chusero and Afkun had the satisfaction to learn that they, as well as the leading inhabitants, were prepared to hold

out to the last, if such were the wish of the prince; but that if no real benefits were likely to arise from a prolongation of their resistance, they would take it upon themselves to arrange for a surrender, as soon as they should be assured of the safety of the prince, and of his valiant champion.

“You,” they said, “can never expect to make a capitulation, which will not include your own submission; and then you would be in the hands of a man—that odious Persian—from whom you could expect no mercy. Betake yourselves, therefore, to Cashmere, while yet you may—your presence there is of infinitely more importance than it can be any longer in Lahore; and should you ultimately succeed in rescuing the empire from the sway of that tyrant, be confident that the people of Lahore will be among the first to hail your triumph, and to rally round your throne.”

Chusero and Afkun were deeply affected by these natural and fervent expressions of attachment; and being upon further reflection convinced that the course thus suggested, was the right one, they took an affectionate farewell of their friends, and at midnight, disguised as der-

vishes, passing through a postern door of one of the towers of the fortifications, bent their footsteps towards Cashmere.

In the afternoon of the next day, the authorities sent a messenger, with his shield on his back, to the camp of the imperialists, to announce that they were ready either to capitulate upon honourable terms, or to defend the town while a handful of rice remained in their granaries; that they had abundant supplies both of rice and wheat, which they would place at the emperor's disposal, but that there should be a complete amnesty for the past, and that no plunder should be permitted on any account. Bochari, upon being informed that the prince and Afkun were no longer in Lahore, refused to listen to a proposal for a capitulation upon any terms. But on this occasion, the more prudent councils of Auzeem, supported as they were by the clement disposition of Jehangire, who felt at all times for the sufferings of his people, fortunately prevailed; and Auzeem took care that the terms of the surrender, which were eventually arranged as the authorities had proposed, should be inviolably observed.

CHAPTER XV.

The russet suit of camel's hair,
With spirits light, and eye serene,
Is dearer to my bosom far,
Than all the trappings of a queen.

MAISUNA.

ALTHOUGH the tidings of the entire destruction of the Cashmere auxiliaries had reached his province before Afkun's return, nevertheless upon his arrival at his castle, which he and Chusero reached in safety, shortly after their departure from Lahore, he was received with tokens of universal satisfaction. The many families who had to mourn the loss of kindred and friends, were speedily reconciled to the decrees of fate; and they deemed it the highest mark of honour which the young prince could confer upon Cashmere, that he now sought

within its precincts protection, and relied upon its generosity for new resources.

Nourmahal received her consort with more ardour than she had ever before exhibited towards him. Though defeated at the Sutledge by overwhelming force, and through the fatal want of discipline manifested by Man-Singh and his Rajaputs, yet no tidings of that great battle had reached her ear, which spoke not of the subah of Cashmere as still the bravest among the brave. The fame of his actions in Lahore,—of his defence, single-handed, of the gate, when it was upon the point of being opened by the enemy,—of his ready valour when about to be trampled down by the elephants,—of his exhibition of undaunted courage and unequalled strength in the arena,—his defeat of the forty assassins, and above all, of his enterprize in breaking down the barrier which the imperialists had thrown across the Rawee, had preceded him to Cashmere. The people were proud of his renown. Nourmahal could not be insensible to the marks of warm and genuine affection lavished upon her by such a husband. Her heart, always generous, though too true to its first-born impulse of passion,

taught her that it was her duty to do every thing that depended upon her exertions, to cheer him under the disappointments he had experienced, and to aid him in his efforts to repair them.

Her first interview with Chusero, however, ruffled not a little this train of dutiful thought and feeling. He was not at all like Jehangire in person, or in feature ; but when he spoke, there was a peculiar expression about his eyes, which restored irresistibly to her mind, thoughts she ought never to have known. His delicately fair hands,—his long tapering fingers, were exactly those of the emperor ; besides, there were intonations in his voice, when he spoke with any degree of vivacity, which came upon her ear like a spell that baffled all her resolutions.

For resolutions Nourmahal had made, during the absence of her husband, to conquer what she could not but deem the unhallowed fire that ever since her marriage had burned in her breast, and acquired more intensity every day. She was not forced into this union by any harshness of superior authority. Never was a daughter so beloved by parents, so tenderly cherished as she. What wish had she

ever formed, that had not been anticipated by their ever vigilant affection? What desire could she express, which it would not have been their highest gratification to promote? Contrary to the usages of Hindostan, had she not been left to her own unrestrained, unbiassed dispositions, to receive or decline the tender of Afkun's heart? Her affiance, was it not the result of her own free consent, and her final union, the necessary consequence of that act?

“But what a world was disclosed to me!” she thought in her solitary walk, some days after the return of Afkun. “What visions beamed upon my soul during the few last weeks of my existence, when my will ceased to be my own—after I had pronounced the words no longer revocable! Destiny! destiny! thee alone have I to blame! Can I conceal from myself that my heart knows no emotion when he, who has the best right to my affections, appeals to it for the return of his devoted love? Can I be ignorant of the hopes, the aspirations, that, without any encouragement from my reason, without any sanction from probability, and even against my consciousness of what innocence and rectitude dictate, flutter in this bo-

som, whenever any accidental circumstance, a passing flower, a dream of the night, or one of those impulses that, like a cloud, casts for a while its ominous shadow over me, brings back that image which I ought never to have seen?

“When shall I recover my peace of mind? The councils of the hermit had gone far towards banishing from my soul all those lurking miseries which depressed my spirits, and diverted my thoughts from their proper channel of happiness. After all, what is the happiness of which he spoke? Does it not consist principally in the consciousness that we belong to a better world, that we are treading our way constantly towards it, that obliged to act in the numberless small events of life, the slight routine of every day, we so conform to the progress of circumstances as to draw from them all the honey they contain, and to convert into wholesome medicine the bitter elements which they sometimes present instead?

“Am I overruled, as the dervishes say we all are, by a fate which we cannot overcome? Zeinedeen declares that we make our own fate, and I think he must be in the right. I am—or at least have been—free to resolve—

free to reject my resolution, or to act upon it. One act leads on to another, as one thought springs from that which has preceded it. Thus the chain of life lengthens from hour to hour, and when we arrive at the end of it we find it composed of actions, the children of ideas all our own, and then we complain that this is destiny! The hermit might well laugh at such folly.

“ And yet, assuredly, we are subject to some influences that are to me incomprehensible. Amongst my gazelles at Agra there were some I never could much regard. They were all dependent on my care, and I fed them equally from my own hand. But yet there were some I loved from the instant I first beheld them. Hilali was not more graceful, more playful, more affectionate to me than Zamaa, nor, indeed, so much so, for often she was so wild, so thoughtless, as apparently even to despise my caresses. Nevertheless, her eyes kindled emotions within me, her well-being excited in my heart a real interest, her gratitude, when she expressed it in her way, drew from my lips expressions of tenderness, which I had no predisposition to afford to any of the others.

“ So it is with even the choicest flowers that are reared under my own eye. Some are splendidly painted—I admire them; some are arrayed in the most varied and agreeable colours, and I in vain endeavour to appreciate them; many are worthy of being perpetually renewed as among the best ornaments of my garden, and I take precautions that secure their perennial existence; several are justly deemed stars, for their pre-eminence in beauty, and I worship the Being who has deigned to clothe them in garments of so much loveliness. But here I light on one, modestly hiding, perhaps, in the shade, or gaily smiling in the sun, which at once wins its way to my heart, and with the power of a magician causes a fountain of delight to be born within me, which flows with fresh rapture as often as I behold the precious mystery. Whence is this, since it has not the same enchantment for others?

“ Alas! do we not feel the same controlling power, chaining our impulses of a higher nature? I fondly imagined that the admonitions of Zeinedeen had cured my heart of those secret thoughts and prepossessions, which I dare not acknowledge even to myself. But one peculiar

turn of expression in the features of Chusero—one occasional modulation of his voice—puts to flight all my inward reserve, and I wait for their return with the devotion of the Persian watching the first ray of his god on the summit of the mountains.

“Would that there were an end to this struggle! Shall it ever be ended? What is this prince to me? In himself nothing. I could pass through a host of such as he is without remembering the countenance of one of them. But then those resemblances which start like meteors about him—what have I not to fear from their visitations?

“Nor is this all. The emperor, will he not pursue the prince hither? Flushed as he is with victory, will he be content to resign to Chusero the fairest province in his dominions—that which it cost Acbar so much labour to subdue—the gem of gems in the diadem of Hindostan? What a wreath for a human brow! The crown of the East, resplendent with the glory of the sun, the pledge of peace, or the flambeau of war to a hundred millions of people!

“Whose is the voice—whence comes it—in

the night and in the day whispering to me of the hour when that wreath of majesty shall descend upon these throbbing temples—and this hand—this feeble, trembling hand, shall wave the sceptre of so vast an empire? My brain wanders through other worlds—I attempt in vain to remember where and who I am—my very name vanishes from my recollection—when these visions—these tempests of portentous thought—burst upon my soul!

“What if the insurgent cause should be successful? The fortune of war may perchance desert the standard of Jehangire—Afkun may be the conqueror yet. Is it *his* throne I desire to share? That is not the loyalty my father has planted in this heart. *He* is not the lawful heir of the generous sovereign whom my infant lips were taught to bless, as the restorer of our ancient family to those honours which it long had worn, and now wears again with so much dignity. Should Chusero be the victor! Victor of whom? Of the parent who gave him existence—of his liege sovereign—and so wade through the blood of him whom he ought to love and venerate, to the possession of supreme power! Is it with the sceptre of such a king

as that, I should contaminate this unspotted hand? No—sooner should it strike the unnatural rebel to the earth—if to me the strength were given!”

Kanun presented herself to her mistress, to receive her orders as to the patterns of some new shawls, which were about to be manufactured for her in the neighbouring capital. She found Nourmahal in the cedar walk, but so excited, so changed in appearance, that the timid girl hardly knew her. Not only was her countenance brightened with a degree of energy, such as the Circassian had never seen in it before, but her stature seemed to have grown higher and more erect, the personation of authority accustomed to command, and of power that disdained resistance. Kanun forgot what she had to say, and drew her veil partly over her eyes, dazzled by the apparition.

The presence of the maid recalled Nourmahal from the sea of reveries, on which her mind had been borne away; but Kanun’s quiet train of thought was not so easy to be recovered.

“I am glad at all times to see thee, my dear Kanun,” said Nourmahal, glad to be relieved from the conceptions with which her bosom was

over-fraught; “when I kiss this pale soft cheek, it reminds me so well of the many happy days we have spent together, that they seem to return again.”

“Ah! they were, indeed, happy days; could *you* but think they had returned again, we should all think so too.”

“What is going on in the castle? what are they all doing to-day?”

“The subah and the prince,—what a beautiful youth he is!—such eyes!—and he walks so like the emperor!—are gone out to the mountains with a number of rajahs, who came in from the capital this morning.”

“Have they brought any intelligence from the south?”

“Nothing of any importance, that I have heard, except that the people of Lahore opened their gates to the emperor, and that he means to hold his court there for some time.”

“Ah! I remember Lahore. It was there, Kanun, that fortune first smiled on my beloved father. I should like much to see it again, and the small hut in which we lived.”

“But you would not like—would you? to live in the hut again—accustomed, as you long

have been, to palaces so superb as that at Agra, and this in which you now reside?"

"I really do not know. You perhaps would be incredulous if I were to say that I should. What matters it where one lives, if the mind be at rest? That, my dear Kanun, after all, is the great secret."

"Ah! but how difficult it would be to descend from a palace to a hut, and at the same time carry with you a contented mind!"

"Why so? Suppose that by the fortune of war, or by some series of unforeseen calamities, I were reduced to the condition in which my beloved parents were when they first entered—aye, and for years after they took up their residence in, Lahore; think you that I should not, like them, cheerfully sit down and toil for my own bread?"

"Oh! the very thought of such a sad reverse, is dreadful. If such a thing were to happen, what would become of poor Kanun? of us all? who feel that we live only for our adored mistress?"

"Surely you would not abandon me? would you?"

"Never!" said the affectionate girl, with an

emphatic emotion, that spoke the true and artless attachment she felt for Nourmahal.

“Assuredly, it would not be difficult for us to maintain ourselves. We could all do something or another. I am myself no bad hand at embroidery. I can paint a little on ivory. Some of the dresses in brocade, which, when I was under my mother’s care, I worked for myself, were supposed not to be ill done.”

“Far from it. They were truly admired for their novelty and exquisite neatness. Indeed, I heard it said, that if you had been compelled to produce many such examples of your skill, you might easily make your own fortune.”

“Well, then, you see we should have some ground to begin upon. We should all work together, some at brocade, some at painting, some at copying music, some at making transcripts of the Koran, some at tapestry, while you would amuse us with your stories; and so, I fancy, Kanun, we might be as happy as the day is long, and as rich as Emir Jemla.”

“Dear mistress, so we might; but still it is horrid to think of.”

“Jemla did not think so. He was, you know, originally a shepherd boy.”

“ Ah! I did not know that. He is now, they say, the richest merchant in Golconda; and, if he liked it, might dine on diamonds every day, without lessening his store.”

“ While employed as a shepherd, he was one day crossing a river amongst those mountains yonder, when his mantle, which was a goat-skin with all the hair on, fell off his shoulder, and was carried down the stream. He gave it up as lost, the torrent bore it away so quickly out of his sight. The following day, however, happening to be crossing the same river, somewhat lower down, he, to his great joy, found his goat-skin stopped by some rocks. He took it out of the water, and having dried it in the sun, he shook it to get rid of the sand with which it was encumbered, when he beheld the ground spread with a shower, not of sand, but of gold.”

“ Of gold ! ”

“ Of gold dust ! Wondering whence it came, he shook his skin again, when forth fell another shower, and another, until he could extract no more.”

“ Something wonderful is always happening to these shepherds. Some of the good genii,

no doubt, filled his cloak with the gold, in reward for some kind action he had done."

"I know not how that was. He dipped his skin again in the same part of the river, spreading it over the bottom, and placing a heavy stone on each corner to keep it down. He returned to find it in the morning, and after drying it in the sun, as before, he obtained from it a still more copious supply. In this manner he procured as much of the precious sand as was sufficient to load a camel, and having taken leave of his master, he set out with his cargo to Delhi, where he disposed of it to great advantage. He then returned to Cashmere, with many trinkets in gold and silver, travelling the country as a pedlar. He next purchased a stall in the great bazaar at Agra, where he appeared as a merchant, dealing in rubies, emeralds and diamonds, and not satisfied with the good fortune by which his industry was rewarded, he removed to Golconda, became a proprietor of diamond mines, and now inhabits a splendid castle, in which he retains an army of his own, and lives in all the splendour of a sovereign."

"There is a freak of fortune ! a shepherd-boy transformed into a sovereign !"

“No freak of fortune, Kanun, but the fair and natural result of well-directed industry. So let us not despair, even if we should be driven to live by our own exertions.”

“Well, if that ever should be the case, and we should happen to get as rich as Emir Jemla, we should have no great reason to complain. Was there not some emperor, in former days, who in the midst of all the treasures he could command, preferred to support himself by making sandals?”

“I never heard that he made sandals. In other respects the story is true. Mamood, the sandal-maker, as you call him, was certainly in some respects a very singular character. Like many others of our emperors, his early days were spent in a prison, where, despising the allowance that was granted to him by the state, he supported himself by his writings. It was with him a maxim, that ‘he who could not work for his bread, did not deserve it.’ Amongst other strange peculiarities by which he was distinguished, do you know, Kanun, that he never had more than one wife?”

“The barbarian! Only one wife! Ha! ha! ha! That was ridiculous. I could as soon fancy a

peacock with only one feather ! I hope he treated her well ; at the very least he must have kept her in a shrine of gold."

" Quite the reverse. Even when he was upon the throne, he made her do all the work of his house with her own hands."

" What, the sultana of Hindostan make coffee and wash the cups with her own hands !"

" Aye, and change the mats, and sweep the floor, and make the fires, and mend his garments, too, when they were worn threadbare !"

" The silly woman, to put up with such tyranny !"

" Yes ; but, Kanun, she loved him."

" There we all fail, simpletons that we are, all wreck our dignity upon that fatal rock."

" One day, when the empress unfortunately burnt her fingers while baking bread for their supper, she asked him to allow her even one maid, to assist her in her domestic toils."

" He had not the cruelty to refuse her !"

" Indeed, but he had. It was, he said, a needless expense, which he would never bring on the state !"

" I know that if I had been his wife, he

should have gone to bed without his supper for that night, at least."

"Those hours of the day which others spend in sleep, Mamood devoted to labour,—chiefly transcripts of the Koran, which he executed with such accuracy, that no man could detect an error in his page. Upon the produce of his labour he lived."

"He must have been an uncommon ideot."

"Read the poems of Minhage, in which you will find him celebrated—and justly celebrated—for his energy in the field, his wisdom in the council, his justice in the seat of judgment. He was the patron of every useful science and elegant art, and a beneficent father to his people."

"With his one wife?"

"Ah, Kanun! is it possible to love more than *one*?"

CHAPTER XVI.

And shall a king, of nature uncontrolled,
And spirit lofty as his state, submit
To such degrading check? Impossible!
He must and will resent it,—Pray proceed.

HINDOO DRAMA.

MUCH as the parental heart of Jehangire was afflicted by the obstinacy of Chusero, in prolonging a civil war that now seemed more unlikely than ever to favour his designs of usurpation, still the necessity of an expedition to Cashmere presented some visions to the emperor's mind, which were not without their charms. He had heard and read many panegyrics upon the agreeable climate, the combinations of mountain, valley, forest, and stream, which gave peculiar features, and ever-varying beauty to its natural scenery. He had, from his earliest

youth, filled his memory with the legends and traditions which spoke of its ancient ages of renown. He was conversant with every thing his favourite poets had written in praise of its flowers and nightingales, and above all, of the exquisite forms and irresistible attractions of the maidens, who inhaled the pure and fragrant air of those green declivities, while chasing the blue butterfly until their cheeks took the blush of their native rose,—one of the wonders of the world.

Jehangire had often pictured to himself the pleasures he should enjoy, when relaxing from the cares of empire, he might be at leisure to wander idly through the groves and saffron-meadows, and pore over the transparent fountains, of Cashmere. It was, to his fancy, a world set apart from the busy scenes of life, in which he might altogether divest himself of the weight and emblems of sovereign authority, and subsiding to the level of the shepherd and the mountaineer, enjoy those emotions of independence and happiness which nature loves to bestow upon those, who worship her amidst the solitudes she has peculiarly consecrated to her own immortal presence.

Nor was he without the hope—the illusion, perhaps, but still one it pleased him to indulge—that some happy accident might enable him to behold once more his son—his rebellious, criminal, and unrepentant boy—to win him from the unhappy path, on which he had too long delayed—to forgive him all that had passed—to press him to his breast, and kindle in his eyes those well-known smiles, so dear to a parent—so powerful to subdue every feeling of resentment.

No man was less fitted than Jehangire to maintain these continued struggles between the duties of the sovereign, and the impulses of the father. The fluctuations between the two characters, though occasionally terminating on the side of stern justice, preponderated in the main, in favour of those feelings, which not even gross filial ingratitude can often eradicate from the parental bosom.

Did Jehangire endeavour to conceal from himself, that whatever there was of tenderness in the composition of his character—and it is not to be denied that he had his share—whatever there was in his mental constitution, which rendered him susceptible of the influence of

poetry, of beautiful scenery, and made him a listener to the mystic voices that breathe from the recesses of woods, the undulations of ever-flowing waters, the airy invisible multitudes of insects and choirs of birds exulting in the felicity of existence—opened out like the parched flower, expanding to receive the dews of evening, when he reflected that Cashmere now contained another treasure, more precious to his soul than a hundred diadems?

“Nourmahal!” What raptures were linked in his mind with that sweet name! To pronounce it in secret to his own ear, was to summon to his cheek the very elements of life—to turn him away and detain him, hour after hour, in the silence and solitude of the night, from all other thoughts.

Strange to say, Jehangire, though he had abundant cause for complaint against the political conduct of Afkun, never entertained towards that distinguished person the slightest feeling of hostility. He never, for a moment, apprehended that the Turcomanian possessed, or could gain the affections of Nourmahal, although her legal protector. The relation in which he stood towards her, invested him, in

the contemplation of the emperor, with a character rather parental than conjugal—and, as such, estimable on account of its connexion with her preservation, for what, he hoped, to be her future and higher destinies. He, therefore, heard with deep pain from Auzeem, of the many base schemes by which Bochari had attempted to get rid of that great warrior; and it was amongst his hopes, that, if the expedition to Cashmere should be prosecuted with success, he might enjoy the opportunity of making some arrangement with Afkun, by which the ties subsisting between him and Nourmahal, should be dissolved, without injury to the warrior's pride, or to the respect which the monarch, more than any of his subjects, was bound to shew to the laws of the empire.

To Bochari, Jehangire had not lately ventured to breathe a syllable about Nourmahal. The hatred which embittered every expression of that functionary, whenever he had to make mention of Afkun, since the period of their personal encounter in the Sutledge, was so implacable, that to speak to him of the one, was only to draw from him a volley of imprecations as to the other. To Auzeem, however, the em-

peror did not hesitate to disclose his most intimate thoughts on all subjects, especially when shut up together in his private cabinet, whether in the camp, or in the palace at Lahore, they smoked the chibouque, or indulged in an extra cup of wine.

It was already perceptible to many persons about the court, that the influence of Auzeem, in the direction of public affairs, began to assume a defined character, since the commencement of the civil war. The title of "My Uncle," by which Jehangire had always distinguished him, more in the familiarity of mirth, than from any acknowledgment of particular esteem, lately seemed, in the opinion of shrewd observers, to wear a new and more important meaning. Auzeem was not the last to be sensible of his position. His knowledge of mankind, his acquaintance with the habits of sovereigns and princes in different countries, and a cheerfulness of disposition, which taught him at all times to look at the sunny side of things, enabled him to accommodate himself to the eccentricities and whims of the emperor, without incurring the charge of pandering to his vices, or even of encouraging them. In his

laugh and his jest there was always a limit, beyond which the respect he felt for himself never permitted him to go. He was not ambitious. He detested intrigue, cabals, and machinations of every description, whatever the purpose which they contemplated. He looked upon all such courses as the unequivocal characteristics of that mean order of intelligence, which, whenever it happens to obtain the ascendancy in states, never fails, however specious its occasional triumphs, to draw after it national calamity and degradation.

Jehangire found himself, without intending it, gradually approximating every day towards Auzeem, and, in the same proportion, diverging from the path which Bochari had hitherto been accustomed to mark out for him. The coarseness of language and of manner, the impatience of contradiction, and the jealousy of supreme control, which on every occasion, whether of slight or primary importance, characterised the Persian, were of such common occurrence, that before his accession to the throne the prince never stopped to analyse or question them. But after he put on the crown, he more than once felt that the authority belonging to his

station was restrained by a will not his own. This feeling touched his pride, and broke in upon the inveteracy of habit; and although the labour of emancipating himself from the domination to which he was so long subject, deterred him from resolving on any material change, yet the idea occurred to him that if a change were to be made, there was no person in whom he would more willingly repose his confidence than Auzeem.

The latter was not ignorant of the emperor's prepossession respecting Nourmahal. To his ear were divulged, through some channel or another, those secrets of the imperial harem, which, strengthened by his own keen observation, enabled him to judge that a void existed in that establishment, not easy to be filled up. The favourite of a former day complained of the emperor's indifference—of his abstraction—the long intervals between his visits to a region which had been accustomed to his particular attention. There was no recognised sultana. The consorts of the sovereign appeared to be all upon an equality, much more mortifying to their pride than a recognised scale of rank. Where each had as shadowy a right as the

other to deem herself preferred, jealousy became more active, and converted the harem into a theatre of discord.

Auzeem, it may be supposed, was no admirer of Bochari. Still he did not wish to make a man accidentally invested with so much power, his enemy. His mind was the reverse in all things of that of the Persian. But his experience rendered him circumspect, and taught him to avoid collision with that dangerous adventurer. Whenever he had occasion to differ from him in the council, he expressed his opinions mildly—and in the shape of interrogatory, as if he were seeking for information and advice, rather than giving both. Thus he had the good fortune to add every hour to his rising influence with the emperor, without awakening the suspicions of the commander-in-chief. To military science or experience Auzeem avowed no claim. On civil matters he might sometimes have an opinion—which, however, he had no desire to press, or even to shape for discussion, unless it seemed to others, better qualified than himself to judge, worth attention.

Like Jehangire, Auzeem had a strong turn for literature and the fine arts. It was the

emperor's habit, when a sleep of an hour or two dispelled the effects of his indulgence at the table, to pass a part of the night in reading, or in having read to him, portions of the history of his empire, or of the works of the most celebrated poets, and not unfrequently of the theologians and philosophers, with whose writings he was remarkably conversant. Auzeem was often his only companion during those periods of study, which no pressure of public business was ever allowed to disturb. The uncle and the nephew, if they may be so described, also resembled each other in a turn for adventure; and when, after a poem or a tale was concluded, they discussed the incidents and characters of which it was composed, they often went on to dramatise situations similar to those of which they had just read, and wove a series of enterprizes and escapes, to which each contributed a sequel, until they believed themselves to be altogether transferred to the world of imagination.

It was in moods such as these, perhaps, that Auzeem learned the whole extent of the passion nurtured in Jehangire's bosom for Nourmahal. He saw that it was a real, unsophisticated, fer-

vent feeling, cherished as a sacred treasure, subject to no caprice, the same when the emperor's mind was agitated, as when reposing in the most serene tranquillity. The difficulties which stood in the way of his desires, tended, no doubt, to augment the power which this passion exercised over his soul. To conquer those difficulties—but at the same time to preserve a strict and impartial observance of the laws relating to the union between the sexes, which, in all our communities, whether Mahometan or Hindoo, are universally held as dear to us as our lives, was the frequent object of his conferences with Auzeem, from the moment that the expedition to Cashmere was resolved upon.

It seemed essential, for many reasons, that the troops selected for that purpose should proceed upon their march without delay. The legion which the province had already sent to the war having been annihilated, it became expedient, if practicable, to prevent the subah from gaining time to form another. While the war lingered in any quarter of the empire, it afforded a pretext to the disaffected in the other districts. for questioning the authority by which

the imposts were levied, and for committing various acts of insubordination. As soon, therefore, as the emperor believed Lahore to be secure from any danger of a fresh insurrection, and that he had succeeded in purchasing, by his kindness to all the inhabitants, and his largesses to the persons who seemed to possess most influence over them, that general good-will upon which it was his highest ambition to rest the foundations of his throne, he gave orders for the usual consultation of the astrologers. The auspicious hour having been ascertained, the troops, consisting chiefly of light cavalry and light artillery, fitted for mountain warfare, setting out at the prescribed moment, proceeded on their route towards Cashmere.

Bochari was fully apprised, from the information of officers who had already served in that province, of the vast strength of the castle occupied by Afkun. A small garrison, he learned, was sufficient to defend it against any force that could be brought to bear upon it. Raised upon an elevated platform, girdled by a natural rampart of rock, to which hardly any artificial additions were necessary, completely insulated by a deep moat filled with water, containing within

itself ample resources in wells, in granaries for every kind of supplies, in woods and gardens,—in short, every thing conducive not only to subsistence, but to the convenience of life, such a fortress seemed capable of defying every ordinary resource of war.

Finding it, therefore, necessary to avail himself of such other means of success as circumstances might render expedient, Bochari conceived the design of summoning Kazim Ayas and the mother of Nourmahal to the presence of the emperor, with a view to treat them as hostages, to be dealt with as he might decide, in case the Turcomanian's stronghold should turn out to be otherwise unassailable.

If Nourmahal possessed the power over her husband with which her fascinations, so much talked of, were supposed to invest her, she would not, he thought, refuse to apply it for the preservation of those so dear to her, should their lives be fixed upon as a price for the surrender of the castle.

This design, worthy of his character, he took care to conceal from the knowledge of the emperor. To him Bochari represented the diffi-

culties that might present themselves in the capture of the strongest fortress of the empire ; adding that it might therefore be useful to send for Kazim Ayas and Mangeli, in order that they might, as they were bound to do, by the high office which the chancellor held, and by their allegiance, and gratitude for many honours conferred upon them, exert their best influence with their son-in-law to induce him to acknowledge the authority of the rightful sovereign, and to give up the rebellious Chusero.

The plan, placed in the latter point of view, coincided so agreeably with the emperor's projects in other respects, that he felt no hesitation in assenting to it. Letters were in consequence forthwith despatched to Agra, commanding Kazim and Mangeli to follow the emperor without delay to Cashmere, and authorising the chancellor to delegate the duties of his office, during his absence, to a commissioner named by himself for that purpose. The parents of Nourmahal received the mandate with feelings of unqualified delight. The hope of soon again embracing their child, put aside all thoughts of the inconvenience of so long a journey, and

Kazim, moreover, flattered himself with the expectation that, through his interference, Afkun might be dissuaded from pursuing any farther a line of conduct not likely to serve the cause of Chusero, or to redound to his own credit.

CHAPTER XVII.

My royal friend has an unaccountable taste. What can I think of a king so passionately fond of chasing unprofitable quadrupeds? "Here runs an antelope! There goes a bear!" Such is our only conversation. Even at noon, in excessive heat, when not a tree in the forest has a shadow under it, we must be skipping and prancing about like the beasts whom we follow. Are we thirsty? we have nothing to drink but the waters of mountain-torrents, which taste of burned stones and maukish leaves. Are we hungry? We must greedily devour lean venison, and that commonly roasted to a stick. Have I a moment's repose at night? My slumber is disturbed by the din of horses and elephants, or by the sons of slave-girls hallooing out, "More venison, more venison!" Then comes a cry that pierces my ear, "Away, to the forest, away!"

SACONTALA.

THE emperor set out for Cashmere in high spirits. The war he looked upon as substantially terminated in his favour; the great object

he had now to obtain of a political nature, was the capture of the rebellious prince ; until that was accomplished, he could not be at ease upon his throne, inasmuch as if the prince were to remain at large, he would, no doubt, always find the means of exciting the spirit of revolt in one or more of the remote provinces of the empire.

The country between Lahore and Cashmere may be said to present almost a level surface, to the very foot of the mountains within which the latter district is situated. Here and there tracts of forest afford to the traveller a temporary protection from the heat of the sun, which shines down upon all that immense plain with a degree of intensity not experienced in any other part of Hindostan. The rivers are numerous by which it is intersected ; but they flow in such imperceptible currents, spreading frequently into large lakes when swollen by the melting of the snows on the mountains, and then leaving behind them marshes, which speedily become jungles, that the roads most frequented in one year, are in the succeeding year scarcely to be distinguished. The march of an army over such a plain as that, is necessarily attended with numerous diffi-

culties. Hemmed in, moreover, along its whole northern border by an abrupt chain of rocks, rising like a mural boundary almost to the sky, its atmosphere traversed by no refreshing breezes, and when disturbed, varied only by winds hotter even than the simoom of the desert, it scarcely permits to man or beast the power of breathing, or of moving, without great pain.

The emperor, therefore, leaving his elephants at Lahore, mounted the fleetest of his Arabian hunters, and attended by Auzeem, and a small escort of his household guard, confided himself to the care of guides, resolved to journey chiefly by night, and to pursue the shortest route which could be found practicable to the nearest range of the mountains. Once arrived on the rising grounds, they could travel at their ease by circuitous paths into Cashmere, sporting on the way, or resting among the cooler regions of the Himalahs, until the whole army should overtake them. Bochari, as commander of the forces, could not abandon them to the control of any inferior officer, upon such an occasion. But he had full authority from the emperor to consult his own and their convenience in every possible way, resting in the forests, making short

marches during the night, and keeping as nearly as a reasonable degree of expedition could allow them, to the banks of the rivers, that they might, under no circumstances, be out of the reach of the vital element.

Jehangire took also with him his dogs and hunting leopards, his falcons and fowling-pieces, not forgetting his celebrated gun Droostandaz, that never missed any object at which he aimed it. It was of Damascus manufacture, the barrel exquisitely formed within and without, exhibiting, near the extreme end, a small but exceedingly bright diamond, as a point for directing the sight, and along its sides, curiously inscribed in gold, a series of hieroglyphic characters, which were said to bestow upon it the virtues it possessed. The barrel was set in a stock of ebony, cut from a tree that had grown in the garden of Eden. It was inlaid with pearls white as the snow, and with emeralds and rubies of great price. Droostandaz was always kept in a silver case, lined with purple velvet, except when the emperor wished to use it. Such was the veneration in which this gun was held, that it was a rule with Jehangire to discharge it on the first day of every

month, and this discharge was immediately followed by the whole train, from the highest dignitary to the lowest stipendiary enrolled in the service of the state, whether cannoneer or matchlock-man, who happened to be at the time within the reach of its report.

A few nights' hard riding, under the direction of guides perfectly conversant with the country, enabled the imperial party to pass the more oppressive part of the plain, and to gain the eminences leading to the mountains, of which they speedily became sensible by the fresher air which they began to breathe. Here they reposed for a while, enjoying the breezes that came down, wafted on the surface of many a merry stream, and which, after the furnace they had just gone through, they found peculiarly delicious. As they ascended the mountains they met, from day to day, with game in abundance—antelopes, deer, quails, grey and black partridges, wild ducks and teal, which they did not disdain to dress for themselves, when they happened to be near no hamlet, where persons could be found to perform that office for them. On these occasions, Auzeem took an active part in the culinary

functions, in which he displayed no common skill. The emperor found a new pleasure in affording him assistance. The produce of the morning's sport, in which Droostandaz maintained its celebrity, was distributed at noon; a shady ravine was then fixed upon, to which brambles, and other dried wood, was brought by some of the escort; fires were lighted; the birds were divested of their feathers; the deer, if any had been taken, were cut up into fragments; and both were stretched on spikes of the arbutus, which grows in abundance on those heights. The spikes being then placed round the fires, were carefully turned round, until the viands, whose savoury odours filled the atmosphere with a fragrance peculiarly welcome to the sense of mountain sportsmen, were fully roasted, when the whole party sat in circles, without any ceremonies of precedence, and enjoyed the meal they had procured with their own hands. The sparkling streams falling near them were their only drink, and although Auzeem, as well as his imperial companion, were of opinion that the spring would have been improved, if it could be made to blush a little with a flask of Cabul wine, nevertheless,

they both agreed, that the game of the Himalahs was the most delicious they had ever tasted.

Having had no occasion to ascend to the upper ranges of the country, in pursuit of sport, the hunting party roved through a charming climate. Valleys and gentle declivities, carpeted with thymy herbage, opened passages for them around the bases of bold mountains, whose summits were crowned with perpetual snow. They seldom, failed towards night, to discover huts of shepherds, or clusters of habitations belonging to villagers, where, though unknown, they were received with the greatest hospitality. Mats were stretched on the floor, and covered with sheep-skins, on which they slept; in the morning, the new milk of cows and goats was presented to them in wooden bowls, with cakes baked upon the embers of the cedar, and cream-cheese, fresh from the hand of the fair manufacturer, and spread upon a couch of green reeds, newly plucked from the neighbouring stream. These simple luxuries, enjoyed in the pure air of morning, beneath a sky of transparent azure, amid the music of waterfalls and gentle breezes, and myriads of

birds, imparted new life to Jehangire, and taught him how irreparable were the privations of those sons of fortune, whom soft cushions, and nocturnal indulgences, and habits engendered by artificial wants, detained at such hours beneath the gilded roofs of their palaces.

Nor did he disdain, when, towards evening, no sign of human dwelling was observable, to assist his companions in cutting down wood and erecting rude huts, beneath which, if the night were cold, they found an agreeable shelter. But if the moon silvered the sky and the valley, and the plane or cedar offered its friendly shade, and the softened genial breeze just stirred the foliage with that sweet murmur, so friendly to sleep, he preferred the couch thus prepared for him by nature, surrounded by his beagles and hunting leopards, who formed a night-guard, not unworthy even of the Emperor of Hindostan, so beautiful did those noble animals appear when wrapped in slumbers, from which the slightest sound of his voice would have aroused them, had he had occasion for their services.

The enjoyments of the party were sometimes varied by fishing, when they reached the more

copious torrents which tumbled from the rocks above them. Here they amused themselves by fabricating baskets from the willows, or reeds, or such other materials as the place afforded. Placing themselves near the midst of the stream, and holding their baskets firmly beneath the rush of the waters, they soon received whole clusters of the red and silver mullet, the carp, the trout, and pike, and chard, whose efforts to escape, by leaping from the toils in which they were caught, and by slipping through hands unaccustomed to deal with such prey, afforded cause for many blithesome bursts of laughter. But the more awkward fishermen were not without their revenge, when, the fires being lighted, they beheld the scales lately so polished and evasive, assume a deep rich brown, and inhaling from the cheerful blaze the incense of the smoking captives, prepared for the feast which they were about to enjoy with hearty appetites.

While thus roaming among the hills, Au-zeem, by the emperor's desire, issued strict orders that his real character should on no account be mentioned by any of his suite; that they should be represented simply as a

party of idlers, in search of sport, and that no appearance of state observance, or homage, should indicate to strangers the presence of any person above the ordinary station of cavaliers.

In order to preserve his assumed character, Jehangire exchanged his jewelled turban, his flowered satin pelisse, his cincture of Persian gold cloth, his vest of brocade, and his trowsers of white silk, for the plain attire of a hunter, consisting of a linen vest and trowsers bound at the waist by a shawl, a light green cloth pelisse, and round cap, covered with the yellow fur of the flying squirrel, which Auzeem succeeded in procuring for him at one of the villages they had visited in the course of their excursions.

One afternoon, as the lengthening shadows of the poplars, and the golden reflection of the sunbeams upon the mountains, whose snowy peaks were already putting on their mantles of purple, warned Jehangire and his companions that it was time to look out for a resting-place for the night, they were about to establish themselves upon the margin of a river, which ran under a beetling rock, covered with ivy and clematis in full flower, when the quick ear of

Auzeem detected the sound of a distant drum. Bending down to the surface of the water, he listened more attentively, and being assured that he was not mistaken, and that the drum was occasionally aided by some other instrument, he informed the emperor of his discovery, at the same time proposing that they should go on alone to trace the sounds to their source. They had not gone far up the stream, when they satisfied themselves that they were approaching some scene of rustic rejoicing, as shouts of mirth came upon the breeze, mingled with the music of the pipe and tambourine, to whose music dancers were keeping time. The river, suddenly winding through a small defile, led them to a green valley, completely circled by rocks, where they beheld a numerous group of peasants and shepherds, assembled round the stump of an oak tree, on which the musicians were elevated. Youths and maidens, clothed in white linen tunics and trowsers, their heads bound with wreaths of natural flowers, were engaged dancing in a circle, sometimes holding each other by the hand, sometimes separating and chasing each other under an arch of fresh branches, evidently just erected for the purpose.

Then gathering round a pole, which was decorated with gay ribands, intermingled with white and yellow roses, they sang a hymeneal song, inviting to the scene of their festivity two lovers whose union, they said, they were assembled to celebrate. The lovers were hid in a neighbouring cave, but upon the conclusion of the song they came forth hand in hand, vested in bridal garments. A venerable ancient, whose hair flowed on his shoulders like fine filaments of burnished silver, pronounced a blessing upon the blushing pair, as they knelt before him, and the nuptial ceremony being then concluded, the song and the dance were resumed round the pole, the newly married couple joining in the general mirth with the most artless cordiality.

Jehangire, delighted with this picture of rural enjoyment, felt happy that he could become one of the party, without any fear of his rank being detected. The moment the two strangers made their appearance, they were hailed as friends, and presented with curdled milk, parched wheat, cakes, oranges, and sweet lemons, with portions of their green branches still appendant to them. Two of the prettiest shepherdesses in the assembly then selected them for their part-

ners in the next dance, in which they joined with infinite glee, endeavouring, as well as their disciplined limbs could permit them, to imitate the heavy step and the swaggering jumping gait of their male rivals in the scene.

An interval of breathing-time allowed Auzeem to observe, that in the place in which this happy meeting was held, no fewer than seven crystal brooks formed a junction. The streams descended from the declivities of the hills, and singing on their way through trees, and over verdant dells, and naked rocks, united in the centre of the valley. Thence flowing away in one full river, their varied sounds were hushed into a low murmur of sweet content, as if each had felicitated itself upon succeeding in the attainment of an object necessary to the perfection of its happiness. An aged man, to whom he expressed the idea thus presented to his mind, explained that it was for this reason—the meeting of the seven streams, and the joy their music inspired—the valley was usually chosen for the celebration of the nuptials of the peasantry of the district.

In the course of the evening, while all were seated on the turf, partaking of the simple

refreshments that had been provided for them, two sturdy looking boors arose, and placing themselves before Jehangire, asked him what birds he should wish to see or to hear upon the trees around them? The monarch, astonished at the question, replied, that he would be well-pleased if he could hear the blue thrush of the Himalabs, whose song he understood to be enchanting, though it had never yet met his ear. The boors said that the haunt of those thrushes was at some distance from the valley where they then were, and, therefore, that it would require a little time to get the songsters to come to their command, but that they would do the best they could. Ascending one of the rocks, the two men uttered a united call, whose shrillness, at first, pierced the sky, but as it was continued, it softened gradually into a voice of melody, quivering on the air, answered repeatedly by echoes still more musical, until the whole atmosphere seemed busy in repeating and modulating the sounds. Just as they died away, a flight of birds became perceptible at the verge of the horizon. In a few minutes they were perched upon one of the neighbouring trees, whence, after a momentary pause, they

poured forth a full tide of notes, the wildest, the most varied, the most captivating, which even the travelled Auzeem had ever heard from glade or forest. Their azure backs, their wings tipped with Indian ink, and their breasts of a deep autumnal yellow, characterised them as beyond all doubt the identical species of birds which the monarch had desired to behold. The beauteous creatures, being dismissed from their task of obedience, winged their way back again to their distant homes with the joy of exiles, who are permitted, after a long absence, to bend their steps towards the land of their birth.

The next choice was offered to Auzeem, who said, that as he was not particular, he would be contented to renew an acquaintance he had once formed with a colony of rawils* — the pleasantest set of feathered fellows it had been his fortune to have yet encountered. The boors, looking knowingly at Auzeem, and at each other, returned to the rocks they had before ascended, and each placing his fore-finger, bent nearly double, in his mouth, uttered a whistle, which, after a pause, seemed to have been answered from an immense distance. They

* Laughing crows.

then beckoned with their hands, as if summoning in the direction where they stood, a little speck of cloud, scarcely visible, near the highest ridges of the mountains ; it came on, however, rapidly, subservient to their mandate, enlarging as it approached, until separating into fragments, it resolved itself into a troop of above a hundred birds, who took possession of a large mulberry-tree that overlooked the valley. There was something so grotesque in their appearance, the plumage of the back, wings, and tail being of a dun brown, while their heads, surmounted by elevated crests, and their throats and breasts looked as if they had been powdered with flour by some mischievous boy, that Jehangire could not help laughing at the odd choice Auzeem had made.

The emotion of the monarch was taken up immediately by the new visitors as a sort of personal rudeness. They bandied it about from one to another, as if asking, " Did you ever hear such a thing?" until one of the elder rawils, who looked more cunning than the rest, seemed to say, " The man surely must be tipsy:" when up rose a shout of laughter from the mulberry-tree, as if not only each bird, but

each particular leaf upon every one of its branches were endowed with the faculty of turning the "sovereign splendour of the faith" into ridicule. Jehangire was astonished beyond measure. The old bird, not content with this retaliation, waited quietly until the noise somewhat subsided, when with his—"Laugh at us, indeed,—the squirrel!" or sounds which Jehangire could have sworn to be those words—aluding, he supposed, to his cap—the peal was renewed again and again until the emperor, Auzeem, the whole nuptial assembly, and the very boors themselves, joined in the merry chorus, jumping about, and holding their sides, and rolling on the earth, as if the joyous visitation were never to have an end.

This was not all. The leader of the band, determined on an ample measure of revenge, hopped down deliberately upon the ground before Jehangire, and looking up in his face, turned rapidly round on one leg, cocked up his tail, and enriching the earth with spoils, for which the "Safeguard of the world" was little prepared, again gave the signal of mirth. It was answered by the whole century of scaramouches, who, perching on the rocks, had the

impudence to revile the Padishah with all the indignity that could be concentrated in halloos and groans, intermingled with ebullitions of laughter tuned to every note of the ascending and descending scale of the gamut.

Auzeem at length cried out, as well as his aching sides allowed him, that they must all expire, unless the rawils were sent away. His request was attended to, as soon as the boors could recover their power of speech, and the valley, once more resuming the soothing songs of its seven streams, the assembly gradually separated, not, however, before abundant arrangements were made for the hospitable entertainment of the two strangers and their companions, as long as they might choose to remain in that part of the country.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Nature ! Source of all great and lovely things !
What builder can thy temples imitate ?
The music of thy mountains, woods, and streams,
What harper can steal from thee ! Where's the pen,
Or pencil, that can paint thy countless charms ?

BINAI.

As the hunters approached the higher mountains of Cashmere, they were warned by the guides that the creation of loud sounds might be attended with consequences of a fatal description. They mentioned many instances, which they said came within their own knowledge, wherein the echo only of a single horn was known to have loosened immense masses of ice from the sides of the upper declivities, which, driving down before them huge rocks, drifts of

frozen snow, patches of earth, herds of sheep, cottages, and hamlets, tumbled into the valleys beneath them, involving whole districts in calamity. Auzeem was not surprised at this intelligence, as he had heard that some such accidents as these were not uncommon in lofty mountainous regions. It was therefore resolved that the dogs, leopards, and falcons, and their keepers, should remain in the village where they then were, until further notice; and that the escort should return to the army to caution them on their entrance into Cashmere, while Jehangire and Auzeem, attended only by the guides, should proceed to the temple of Mahadeo, with a view to propitiate the god who was held to exercise a tutelar power over the whole of that province. The mere character of pilgrims to that celebrated temple, was of itself sufficient to render the presence of any escort unnecessary, even if they had to pass through columns of the enemy marshalled in order of battle. The guides, calculating by the state of the moon, assured the emperor that the image of Mahadeo, which was already rapidly approaching its full stature, would speedily be upon the wane, and that unless he could suc-

ceed by great exertions in reaching the temple within a few days, he would be obliged to wait another month before he could render it his homage. They stated, that two days before each new moon, there appeared upon the marble altar of the temple a small grain of gold, which grew larger every day, expanding, as it increased in size, into the figure of a human being of the most exquisite beauty; that on the fifteenth day of the moon the god attained his full colossal amplitude, and during the three ensuing days, wielded unlimited authority for good or for evil; but that with the failing orb, the energies of Mahadeo also declined; his figure gradually shrank; and that when the moon ceased to be visible, the god also disappeared, to be renewed only when the crescent again returned to the sky. No person, having any great project in hand, and being within the precincts of Cashmere, ever thought of attempting to carry it into execution, without paying the tribute of his devotions at the shrine of Mahadeo. It was, doubtless, in a great measure owing to his neglect of the god, though much was also to be attributed to the dominant star of the emperor, that the subah of Cashmere had been so unfor-

tunate in all his enterprises, since he took up his residence in that country.

Putting away, therefore, all weapons of defence, resigning Droostandaz to the special care of the commander of the escort, and exchanging their Arabian steeds for mountain ponies, Jehangire, Auzeem, and the guides, taking into their hands the staffs of pilgrims, set out in the early dawn upon their ascent to the Bember, whose summits appeared far distant in the sky, like a scarcely defined line of blue cloud. The green turfy eminences, amidst which they had been hitherto sporting, were soon left behind, yielding to wild heathery tracts of territory, occasionally covered with the thistle and the broom. These products of vegetation gradually became less luxuriant; small patches of stunted brushwood marked their higher progress, until they began to traverse the naked rocks, which at each step seemed to become of more gigantic dimensions, and to be piled upon each other, as if the object had been to erect a rampart, which was to enclose Cashmere, on that side, against the footsteps of the stranger. The whole face of the mountain appeared like a solid wall, through

which it seemed a vain labour to look for any passage.

The guides, however, went on, heedless of any difficulties, leaving the rein on the necks of their ponies, who, penetrating now through narrow fissures, where the feet of the rider touched the rock on either side, now clambering up steps worn by use in the almost perpendicular cliff, now sliding down sudden descents, continued with marvellous sagacity and safety to make their way. By noon, the ridges of Bember became distinctly visible; the cold winds, which blew from its summits, rendered it unnecessary, for the pilgrims to seek refuge from the sun, whose rays, on the contrary, they found it convenient to court, in order to preserve a genial degree of warmth in their frames. They were soon involved in the hoary regions, through which, however, they had no difficulty in making progress, as preceding travellers had already beaten tracks, upon which no new snows had descended.

Upon arriving at the foot of the ridge of Pees-Punchal, the highest of the whole range of the Bember, the pilgrims dismounted, not a little fatigued with their morning's ride. The ponies,

having been unsaddled, were permitted to wander in search of such scanty herbage as they could discover, so near the clouds, while Auzeem, calling for the scrip, in which he supposed he should find the materials for an ample meal,—for which, by the bye, both the imperial pilgrim and his associates were well prepared,—found to their horror, that no scrip was forthcoming, that useful appendage to the staff having been unfortunately left behind.

No sign of human habitation being within the reach of any eye, and the passage of Pees-Punchal being of itself an affair of no small difficulty to be achieved on foot, as the pathway was so perpendicular that the ponies would have quite enough to do to surmount the ascent, with all the assistance the guides could give them, the prospects before the worshippers of Mahadeo were by no means pleasant to contemplate. An antelope or a red-deer came now and then to smile at them, but scared by the slightest movement, off the animals bounded to other ridges, rejoicing in the freedom with which Jehangire would have gladly interfered, if a decree could have controlled them. Never did he feel his sovereign authority reduced to

such ridiculous imbecility, as in the valley of the seven streams, and at the foot of the ridge of Pees-Punchal. Deeply did he lament that he had left Droostandaz behind him.

“How delightfully we should have dined upon that red stag,” he exclaimed to Auzeem, “had but Droostandaz been here!”

“Yes; but, Sire, what would have become of us before the dinner could have been dressed. Pees-Punchal, with all his snows, would have been upon us!”

“I should have willingly taken that risk. We might as well perish of a storm without, as of the tempest which now proclaims vacuity in all the internal regions of my personal fabric.”

While the emperor was thus lamenting the unseasonable absence of Droostandaz, he thought that he heard the bleat of a sheep at some distance. Looking to the quarter whence he believed the grateful voice to have come, he perceived something in motion, towards which, without reflecting a moment on his imperial dignity, he ran as fast as his limbs could bear him. He found himself speedily in chace of a small black horned sheep, which he fortunately overtook. Grasping the terrified little animal by one of its hind

legs, he threw it over his shoulder, with a degree of pleasure he had seldom experienced before, and brought it in triumph to Auzeem, to whose care he resigned it. The unhappy victim was forthwith sacrificed, and cut up into slices. A light was procured from flints, which they found on the mountain; as no other materials for a fire could be discovered, they broke up their pilgrims' staffs for the purpose, and thus enjoyed, most unexpectedly, a feast, which the emperor spoke of afterwards with peculiar delight.

"At the moment I am writing these lines," he says in his memoirs, "I can with truth declare, that in the whole course of my life, I never experienced such exquisite relish in food as in that simple meal, so opportunely furnished by the carcase of a stray sheep."

When the repast was concluded, the party ascended Pees-Punchal, not, however, without considerable difficulty and exertion. But they were more than repaid for their labour, by the prospect which was presented to them the moment they stood upon its summit. The whole valley of Cashmere lay fully revealed beneath them, its saffron meadows, its green pastures, gardens, lakes, rivers, waterfalls, forests, de-

clivities dotted with countless herds, towns, villages, and separate cottages, all illumined by the golden glow of the sun, just dipping below the horizon.

Jehangire, leaning on the shoulder of Auzem, gazed upon the valley in silence. The reality so far exceeded all the expectations he had formed of its beauty, that he doubted whether it was not the delusive creation of some enchanter. The cares of imperial authority, the weight alone of which he had hitherto experienced, were at once transformed into sources of rapture, when the fulness of the thought came upon his soul, that he not only possessed the faculty, in common with other men, to appreciate the charms of that Elysian scene, but that it was a portion of his own rightful empire; that to him, however misguided by evil counsel they might be for a moment, the inhabitants of that fair region were bound to look for the security of that peace and happiness which they seemed already to enjoy, and that, above all, in the midst of the paradise spread out before his eye, beat the pulses of one heart, at least, of whose fidelity he felt assured.

“Else,” he thought, communing with his

friend, "why that message by the symbol she sent me—this symbol, which has never since left my bosom? Ah! Auzeem—to live with Nourmahal, in such a valley as we here behold—shut out from all the world around—to wander together by those tranquil lakes—those streams—beneath those shades—to roam with her among those hills—to inhale, with her, the delicious incense of those saffron meadows—those fields of roses—and at eve, when all nature is subsiding into repose, to listen with her to the song of the bulbul—those—those, indeed, were raptures worth an empire!"

"And for which, I suspect," thought Auzeem to himself, "if all I have heard of Nourmahal be true, an empire must be paid."

The guides were summoned to point out the situation of the capital, and of the fortress occupied by the subah. The former was easily distinguishable, as the large lake, in its immediate neighbourhood, lay expanded below like a mirror of liquid gold, the long rays of the descending sun resting upon it with a lingering delight, as if reluctant to resign to darkness even a temporary dominion over a region of such transcendant beauty.

The fortress was not, at first, discernible ; but as the sun lowered, several spots suddenly glistening, disclosed the windows of the towers, as they reflected the level lines of fire. The whole edifice, with its cupolas, and minarets, and castellated walls, were soon bathed in a flood of splendour. A standard, however, floating in the fresh breeze, with the figures of sentinels moving on the ramparts, whose spear-tops sparkled now and then, as they caught the fading light, indicated preparations little consonant with the features of innocence, happiness, and loveliness almost lulled to sleep, by which they were surrounded.

The guides having pointed out the direction in which the temple of Mahadeo was situated, the pilgrims turned their steps thither. Unlike the other side of the mountain, the descents down which they now had to make their way were frequently encumbered by enormous trees flung down by tempests, uprooted by shocks of earthquake, and wasted by the lightnings of ages, that had torn away their branches, stripped them of their bark, and shivered them frequently into blackened masses, which assumed a thousand fantastic shapes. Some lay across

the beds of torrents, where they were buttressed by piles of rocks, and intercepting the flood, sent it foaming high in air, with tremendous uproar. Others accidentally formed bridges across abysses, whence subterranean cascades resounded. Some had plunged, or were plunging, into ravines, down which no traveller had ever ventured—some, heaped one upon another, lay mouldering with time, yielding funguses of enormous dimensions, whose extraordinary shapes seemed to belong to some other planet—some, with branches stricken into the earth, rose again at some distance, shooting forth fresh descendants, proud of their yet unperished ancestry, which must have been coeval with the infancy of the world.

One awful—ever-accumulating inundation—that must have oceans for its source—swept straight downwards between the walls of a riven mountain until it passed the brow of a precipice, over which, bending like the arch that separates time from eternity, it fell in one overwhelming wave into a deep abyss, a chaos unfathomable, dimly revealed by the lightnings of the element, as it bounded from depth to

depth, through the echoes of everlasting thunders below.

A temple still exists, which Jehangire, the moment he first beheld that stupendous cataract, resolved to erect on a rock hard by, a monument of the admiration with which he viewed that work of Nature—so inimitable by human power—so inexhaustible in her strength—so unlimited in her faculties of production—so marvellous as to the facility with which she executes all her designs, whether she chooses to arrange the colours on the chalice of the tulip, or to toss from her hand a Ganges.

CHAPTER XIX.

“What need of the mirror, when our eyes meet, and
in them we view each other?”

INDIAN POEM.

THE moon rising, with an orb almost complete, and exhibiting within its visible circumference but a small segment still to be silvered, forbade the pilgrims to seek repose during the night. They travelled onward in the direction prescribed by the guides—now along the edge of mural precipices—now over boundless heaths—now through dark forests—now through the dried channels of winter torrents, with all the expedition which their animals could command, until they reached a hamlet, where they found it absolutely necessary to take refreshment and repose. The means for both were

speedily supplied by the tenants of the humble dwellings they found in that part of the mountain, the Cashmerians deeming it a sacred duty, or rather a privilege, to attend to all pilgrims who pass their way. From these good people, Auzeem learned, to his great satisfaction, that the habitation of the famed Zeinedeen was distant only a few hours; and that the temple of Mahadeo, of which the hermit was said to be the high priest, was within an arrow's flight from his residence.

Remounting their ponies, just as the friendly light, which had hitherto guided their steps, grew pale in a sky resuming the roseate tints of morning, the pilgrims drew renovated strength and spirits from the spicy breath, which ascended as an offering to Aurora, from the meadows and the flowery hills below. Some remains of the winter snow still accompanied their path, especially where they had to pass abrupt rocks, or glens impervious to the summer sun. Their route became from hour to hour more and more enchanting, until they at length reached the entrance to the habitation occupied by the anchorite. It was then near mid-day. Auzeem remarked, that Zeinedeen must

be engaged with visitors of distinction, as several ponies, caparisoned in a peculiarly elegant style, were tied together in an enclosure hard by.

Chunder, as soon as his infirm limbs could permit him, answered to the call of one of the guides, who seemed familiar with his name. The old man appeared to derive pleasure from seeing before him persons, whom he at once conjectured to be pilgrims, on their way to the temple of Mahadeo; for it was one of his constant complaints, that those shrines, which he remembered in his youth to have been frequented by throngs of devotees from all parts of the world, had been, in the degeneracy of modern times, almost wholly abandoned. The god, he informed them, had re-appeared as usual, and had nearly attained his perfect form. He had no doubt, that as soon as Zeinedeen was informed of their arrival, he would give orders for their entertainment, during their stay, within his own dwelling.

This intelligence was the more agreeable to Jehangire and Auzeem, as they had heard much of the hermit's science, intelligence, and superior talent, and they were happy to have the oppor-

tunity of enjoying his society in that familiar intercourse which they would thus be permitted to hold with so distinguished a personage. The emperor would be under no necessity to conceal, even if concealment from such a superior being were possible, his true rank and character. Nor was he without a faint hope, that all anchorite as was the occupant of the place—curiosity, or accident, had already enabled him to learn something of the existence, the habits, perhaps the secret feelings and wishes of her, at whose shrine the imperial pilgrim would, at the moment, have preferred kneeling, rather than at that of any golden god or goddess, who had ever been worshipped in Cashmere.

While the strangers were waiting for the return of Chunder, a bevy of gay damsels, with small silver-mounted whips in their hands, rushed together from the interior halls into the court-yard, laughing and talking aloud, in their sweet and playful voices, until they found themselves unexpectedly in the presence of strangers. Immediately checking each other, and flinging their veils, some with rather a coquettish carelessness, over their faces,

they passed on to the enclosure where the ponies were detained. The animals at once recognised their light-hearted owners, and permitted themselves to be led in succession to a stone bench, from which the damsels jumped on their backs, and rode away amidst an abundance of tittering, and of stolen looks at the pilgrims, who, upon their side, watched the scene with at least an equal degree of curiosity.

One of the ponies, a beautiful creature, of a half zebra breed, still remained unmounted, the rein being held by a female slave, who seemed to wait for some person not yet come forth from the residence of Zeinedeen. The pilgrims still stood in the court-yard, waiting to be summoned to the presence of the hermit. Presently a female figure, arrayed in a white muslin turban and veil, a dove-coloured satin pelisse, a tunic of white silk, slightly sprigged with silver, cinctured at the waist by a band of gold, with an emerald clasp in front, and trowsers of the same material as the tunic, appeared, also with a small whip in her hand, mounted in gold, crossing the court-yard with a hurried step. Her cheek was much flushed—her eye highly animated; as she passed, she stopped

a moment, pressed the end of the whip to her reddened lips as if she doubted whether she had not forgotten something behind ; but, immediately resuming her step, hastened to where the slave was waiting.

Auzeem, who had a full view of her countenance and person, stood mute with surprise. After a momentary pause, he turned to Jehangire, to express his emotions of admiration ; but the emperor was no longer near him. The slave, who held the rein, felt herself obliged suddenly to yield it to a more vigorous hand, just as the fair rider had adjusted herself on the padded back of the animal, and in an instant the beautiful equestrian, her poney, and her new guide, were out of sight.

“ This,” exclaimed the latter, when he found himself beyond the danger of observation ; “ this is, indeed, an unexpected joy. Oh ! Nourmahal ! ”

The female so addressed, oppressed by terror upon finding herself in the hands of a stranger, who had hitherto bent down his face, whose motives for bearing her thus rapidly away, she could not divine ; pre-occupied, too, to an intense degree of excitement as she had already

been, so much so that she scarcely noticed what had happened, until a moment before she heard her name thus passionately sounded, wore no longer the ruby on her cheek or lips. A death-like shadow, pale and livid, by turns overspread her brow. Trembling in every limb, unable to hold her seat, she fell while clasping her hands, and, resting her head upon them, lay on the ground like a lifeless victim of despair.

Jehangire, plucking from his bosom the symbol which he hoped she had sent him, placed it in her hand, to assure her of his identity. Was he wrong in that hope? In its withered form would she still recognise the token? What fates depended in the balance of that moment? Kneeling by her side, he sickened in agony; her first word would be to him the sting of death, or the sun of all his future existence.

“Here—buried for ever; oh, fatal messenger!” exclaimed Nourmahal, as her returning sense informed her of the circumstances in which she was placed. “Forgive—forget this; it should never have left the bosom where it now rests.”

Jehangire hung upon every accent; no word escaped his lips. The rapture that rose,

kindling within him,—the thought that, come what may, he was once more in the presence of all he most loved upon earth, dispelled every other idea.

“It hung here,” she continued; “it fell, I know not how—into that mystic fountain—since then, oh, what have I not suffered?”

“It is thine. If I ought not to have received it,—though how can I forget that it reached my hands, that it has since been the companion of my heart?—let it be thine again.”

“Do I dream?” asked the agitated Nourmahal, rising and looking wildly around her. “Whose words are those? That voice?”—

“Am I not remembered?”

“My sovereign! It is, indeed, my imperial lord, here in the midst of his enemies! Fly,—Allah! know you not that all Cashmere is in arms against you?”

“I am here a pilgrim.”

“If you be discovered, nothing will protect you from the hate of your enemies. It is madness to expose your anointed head to their arrows.”

“All seems at peace as yet within your valley.”

“You are assuredly not here without an escort?”

“I have a few,—two or three companions.”

“It is my first duty, then, to implore you to fly while yet you may. Be convinced, that if the intelligence get abroad that the emperor is in the province, you cannot count a moment on your safety.”

“I am, as you see, disguised.”

“Oh, Sire, no disguise can conceal your rank, for you cannot move, you cannot look unlike Selim,—I should have said Jehangire,” she added, blushing all over, kneeling before the sovereign, and bending her head upon the palm of her hand.

“To thee, Selim,—by no other name let me ever be known to thee, at least,—Oh, Nourmahal! How has all this happened? Why was I left in ignorance of the steps that led to this fatal marriage?”

“They were scarcely known to myself. In an evil hour, before—but, oh, question me not—to what tend now such enquiries? My fate is sealed, for *ever*!”

The deep sigh with which that *ever* was pronounced, renewed the distraction which seized

the mind of Nourmahal, when she was first borne away from the care of the slave. Happily a flood of tears came to her relief. Jehangire induced her to sit upon a green bank, and holding both her hands in his, soothed her feelings by all the kindness he could administer. He did not renew the subject nearest to his heart, until he saw that she was more composed.

“It has been always represented to me, that Abul-Fazeel—no friend of mine—was the author of what has occurred.”

“Alas! I know not with whom the idea originated. But I should never forgive myself if I did not, as I do, most fully admit that my consent was freely given,—given, before—Oh, how shall I confess it!—before I knew my heart, before I felt what it was indeed to love!”

“This is a condition hard to be endured. You should have been mine. There is not a pulse in this hand, Nourmahal,—not a thought in thy heart,—that does not proclaim its unison with another than him to whom the laws have bound thee. And he—does he not know this?”

“Afkun is the most generous of men; his soul is noble as his arm is valiant. Alas! that

such a man, worthy of thy esteem, should be at this moment in arms against his lawful sovereign ! He cannot be ignorant that there are some impulses, howsoever they arise, which cannot be controlled ; but it is vain to think more upon this,—my duties are fixed, my destiny is cast !”

“ It is equally vain—Nourmahal, can you—do you wish to forget who it was that first gave you that name ?”

“ Would it had never met my ear ! Oh, that the circumstances of that evening could vanish from my soul !”

“ They cannot,—I was about to say that it was equally vain to expect that I could not think more—think ever, of the impressions of that evening, which, for good or for evil, are inseparable from all that I can now ever know of happiness. I wear the crown of Hindostan, but behold, no sooner was it placed upon my brow, than my son,—Chusero,—my eldest, born —”

“ My tears, too, have been shed for this unnatural rebellion.”

“ Ah ! had you been his parent, if you could but conjecture half the grief which weighs upon

a father's heart, when, instead of affection, obedience, reverence from him who shares the life-blood of your veins, whose infant caresses you remember with a delight that thrills your soul, whose earliest smiles remain star-lights in the canopy of your existence—when, instead of the tenderness you expect, not as a return for your solicitude, but as the growth of the seed you have sown and reared up, you meet only resistance, hostility, bitter, remorseless eagerness to supplant and destroy you,—oh! you would indeed, Nourmahal, give me all your sympathy.”

“Would I could hold out the hope, that even his evil fortunes had produced a disposition to seek for forgiveness.”

“Heaven be my witness, that I ask no more. He has but to utter a single expression of regret, all shall be expunged on the instant from my memory. Tell the boy,—you have lately seen him, perhaps—”

“This morning,—hush! I hear horsemen coming this way,—to those rocks, Sire, or you are lost!”

Jehangire had just time to climb a precipitous ascent above the bank where they were

sitting, when Afkun and Chusero, attended by twenty spearmen, made their appearance in a defile below. They rode rapidly towards Nourmahal, who, summoning all her fortitude, mounted her pony, and composing her veil, rode on to meet them.

“We have been anxiously looking for you, Nourmahal,” said Afkun. “Knowing that you had gone to visit Zeinedeen, we have found it necessary to come out with an escort, for the advanced guard of the invaders are already visible from the castle. We must hasten homeward, and I fear that your excursions must be given up, until the enemy shall disappear. You would be too precious a prize in their hands at such a moment.”

The ladies of the harem, who had only preceded Nourmahal to a fountain hard by, where they went to water their ponies, now joined the cavalcade, of which the emperor had a full view from his place of refuge, without being exposed to their observation. He could plainly distinguish his son, who was mounted on a grey Arabian courser; the animal curvetting, and now and then pawing the earth with a beautiful

pride, seemed conscious that he bore on his back a rider of no ordinary rank. Afkun led the way, riding by Nourmahal's side. The prince and the other ladies immediately followed, and the line was closed by the spearmen, mounted also on spirited animals.

Jehangire watched their progress down the mountain, with the most painful feelings. It was not until his straining eye failed to discern any part of the group, that he descended to the bank, so lately consecrated in his esteem, by having served as a couch for her, who had now full possession of his soul. Sitting there awhile, he tranquillised his thoughts. He felt as if the atmosphere around him still breathed of Nourmahal's presence—still echoed her soft enchanting voice—still gave him back the fresh impression of those features, over which, in a few moments, so many traces of emotion—of emotion so precious to him—had passed, all exalting and perfecting that beauty, of which, he believed, the earth held no rival. At length, bending his steps towards the hermitage, he found Auzeem anxiously waiting his return. That experienced person, however, asked no

questions. He had already learned from the slave, to whom the bewitching form belonged, which had excited his admiration. He easily conjectured what followed.

CHAPTER XX.

“ If you listen to him, my lord, the old man will weary out the stars in telling tales of the days of his youth. Come this way, and heed him not.”

HINDOO DRAMA.

CHUNDER having stated that Zeinedeen was engaged in deep discourse with three strange dervishes, as he supposed them to be, who had recently arrived in Cashmere from the islands of the west, led Jehangire and his companion to an inner chamber, where mattresses were already spread for their reception. Chibouques and coffee were immediately presented to them by two negro slaves, after which a repast, consisting chiefly of hot cakes, fowls, and

rice, was served with lemonade, which the pilgrims found particularly acceptable after their long ride across the mountains.

Auzeem, desirous of learning, if he could, what preparations were going on in the province, with a view to the maintenance of the civil war, questioned Chunder upon the subject as soon as the other slaves had been dismissed.

“ I do not find, Chunder, that so many pilgrims, as I had expected, have assembled to visit the shrine of Mahadeo.”

“ No—nothing like the numbers that used to come in old times. I remember the days when the whole of these mountain sides were covered with them—their staffs making a moving forest as they crowded to the entrance of the temple yonder.”

“ How does it happen that they are now so few ?”

“ Infidels—Mahometans as they are called—have, in these times, been teaching some nonsensical things about houris, and prophets, and other follies, and the silly people are led away to other places—to gingerbread houses with round chimnies stuck up on one side, on the tops of which sooty urchins cry out to them

to come to their prayers. And then they kneel down on a bit of carpet, and go to sleep for a while, and when they get up, they kneel down again, and then they stand and bawl, as if the world was coming to an end."

Jehangire could not repress a smile at Chunder's irreverent description of the religion of the prophet.

"And it is for these childish novelties that the people have deserted the fine old temples built by the hands of the gods, that in the elder days were spread over the land. Why, I well recollect, that when I was once at Bokla, upon the shore of the great sea, there came a storm which lasted twenty days, and every day the sea rose higher and higher, until every house in the town and in the country round, was swallowed up. But the temples of the gods rose as mountains above the raging waters, and afforded dry footing to all the inhabitants. What would have become of them then, I should like to know, if they had only pots turned upside down, and chimnies of whitened mud to fly to?"

"If ever you go to Agra, my friend," said Jehangire, "you will see that the mosques

there are not quite so insignificant as you imagine."

"Pshaw! simpleton! Have you seen the temple of the Sun in Guzerat?"

The emperor was obliged to confess that he had not.

"Nor the fortress of Kebeer, who built the temple, and in which fortress the subah of Cashmere now resides?"

"No; except from the tops of these mountains."

"Then you have seen nothing; you are but a poor pilgrim, just come, I suppose, out of Thibet. They say that that madman, that upstart, Bochari, who leads the sultan, his master, by the nose, is coming hither with a large army to attack the fortress. He might as well have staid at Lahore—and much better—and spent his time, as his father did before him, in daubing pictures of old women."

Auzeem, who saw that the conversation was assuming a turn he had not intended, eagerly interposed with an inquiry whether the fortress was not strongly garrisoned.

"Garrisoned! The fortress of Kebeer garrisoned! I am sure I know not whether there

be many soldiers within the walls, if that be what you mean by a garrison; but this I do know, that ten or twenty men could easily defend it from all the armies that the painter's son can bring against it."

"May I ask," added Auzeem, "who this Kebeer was, of whom you speak?"

"What? Have you never heard of Kebeer? Ha! ha! ha! Well, you are a pair of the most ignorant pilgrims I ever met. There is not a child in Cashmere who could not have told you the story of Kebeer."

"We should be glad to hear it from you," said Auzeem, "if you could spare the time to tell it."

"It is soon told; but I must have a pipe and a cup of coffee first."

Chunder going to the door of the chamber, called aloud to the negroes in his husky voice, who immediately made their appearance, and supplied the vice-hermit, as he might be styled, with the necessaries he required. Then settling himself on a mattress, which he had directed to be brought in for the purpose, and assuming an air of more than ordinary importance, he thus proceeded with his tale.

“ A poor cobbler, who lived in Cyrinagur, as the capital of Cashmere was called in the old times, used to go out frequently in the hard days of winter, with his ass and his hatchet, to the woody hills above the town, to collect fuel to keep his wife and his little family warm in their cottage, while he hammered away in his stall. One day he happened to light upon the tough stump of a brambly tree, which he attempted to chop into small fragments; but his hatchet turning aside from the wood, struck against a stone and was splintered. ‘ No more chopping for you to-day,’ said he, looking at his hatchet. ‘ It was only yesterday you came back from that lazy blacksmith; Kebeer, and now you must go again to get a new edge. Why; how is this? It is not my own—the robber—he has given me an old hatchet of copper, instead of my own bright steel, which I have had all my life. I warrant me, I’ll have him before the Cadi!’

“ The cobbler, you must know, was but an ignorant old man; and so, when he took the hatchet to Kebeer, the latter saw, with the eye of a lynx, what had occurred. ‘ Ah! very true,’ said he, ‘ this hatchet is not yours, it belongs

to another customer, and was sent to you in a mistake. I can't find your own just now ; but no matter, here is a new one, take it and keep it, until I get you your own. By the by, it must have been a very hard tree you were trying to cut, when you splintered this in the way you have done. I should like to see it.'

" 'It was not the tree,' said the cobbler, ' as I told you before ; but a stone, against which it struck, when I missed the stump.'

" 'A stone, was it? Well, the hatchet you now have, will cut through stone as well as wood.'

" The cobbler laughed heartily at the idea of a hatchet cutting a stone, upon which Keeber said, ' If you do not believe me, I'll go with you to-morrow morning to the place where you said you splintered this old hatchet ; and if, at the first blow, I don't cut in two, with the hatchet I have lent you, the identical stone you struck, I shall make you a present of all the hatchets in my shop !'

" The cobbler laughed again and again, much more heartily than before ; well pleased to think how rich he should become, for the shop was full of new hatchets ; and how fortunate he was

in dealing with so shallow a fool. He then went away, saying that he would return the next morning at day-break, and take the blacksmith to the very spot in the wood where the stone was.

“The cobbler could hardly sleep all night, for joy that he should no longer have occasion to mend old shoes. He rose before dawn, and hastening to the blacksmith’s shop, awoke him. They both went together to the wood, and having reached the place where the half-chopped stump still remained, the cobbler pointed out the stone.

“‘Now give me the hatchet,’ said Kebeer. The cobbler placed it at once in his hand. Kebeer, grasping the handle of the instrument with both his hands, and raising it high above his head, struck the stone with all his might. But, instead of splitting the stone, he broke the hatchet in two, when both parts turned at once from a bright steel colour to a deep yellow. The cobbler jumped about, transported with gladness. He danced, and sung, and whistled, half mad with his joy, that had no bounds.

“‘Unhappy simpleton, that I am,’ exclaimed Kebeer, ‘to have made the promise I

have made—but it shall be kept. Go, take possession of my shop, and all that it contains. I am too much ashamed of my folly ever to shew myself there again. All my neighbours would laugh at me, and say—there goes the ass, Kebeer! and they would make long ears with their hands. I'll betake me to some foreign country.'

"The cobbler did as he was told, and from that day he had no occasion to mend shoes any more.

"As soon, however, as the cobbler was out of sight, Kebeer picking up the pieces of the broken hatchet, and uncovering the stone, which was partly buried in the earth, he took it out of the ground, and carefully concealed it under his jacket in the folds of his girdle. He then hastened out of the wood, and proceeding towards the high road, travelled into Hindostan, until he reached Lahore. He there found no difficulty in selling the fragments of his hatchet, for they were of the purest gold, the stone being the celebrated talisman that could turn into gold all things it touched, which was possessed by a Bengalese magician in the olden times—by him, after working numberless

miracles, buried, in a fit of anger, where the cobbler struck by accident against it, and so discovered once more, after the lapse of many thousand years.

“ Kebeer forthwith purchased a great quantity of iron, which he locked up safely in a large storehouse; he then changed it into gold, but when he beheld his growing riches, he began to fear that he should be robbed. He, therefore, hired numbers of armed men, whom he clothed in sumptuous coats of mail; and to whom, on the condition of guarding his treasures, he assigned yearly pensions of such an amount, that some of the greatest omrahs and rajahs, and many of the most learned and illustrious men in the empire, were glad to be enrolled in his service.

“ Kebeer had now an ambition to found cities, and erect temples to the gods, by whom he had been so highly favoured. Attended by his great men, he went about travelling. One day, being in the province of Guzerat, while he was standing on a lofty peninsula, that overlooked the ocean, he beheld an eagle dive into the water. The bird, having thus washed its body, returned to the land, and, perching on a rock,

made obeisance to the sea. Kebeer, astonished at this sight, consulted his learned men, desiring to be informed why the eagle adored the waves.

“One of these, who was acquainted with the language of birds, asked the bird what it was to which he paid his homage. The eagle answered, that while diving in the sea he had struck against the long-lost statue of Sumnaut, the general judge of the dead, and that he, therefore, bowed down before it.

“Search having been made by expert divers, the precious image was discovered, and Kebeer resolved, that there should be erected to the honour of the god, on the summit of the peninsula, a temple, such as human eye had never seen before.

“Artificers in masonry and wood, in gold, silver, and ivory, having been collected from all parts of the world, the temple was speedily raised; since called, from its exceeding beauty and magnificence, the Temple of the Sun. It is in the interior larger than the whole town of Cyrinagur. Its walls are one hundred and fifty cubits high, and nineteen cubits thick. There are three entrances to it; and, at one of the en-

trances, are two figures of elephants, in white marble, each with a man seated on his trunk. You would think they were living, and about to move in another direction. At another entrance are two surprising figures of horsemen, completely armed, and mounted on bronze horses, of marvellous workmanship ; at the third, is a figure of a dead lion in brass, with two tigers, of the same material, standing over it, as if about to devour the slain monarch of the forest. The wonder is, that they do not devour it.'

" Over the temple is spread a dome of gold, in the interior of which the sun is represented by a myriad of diamonds, that blaze in torch-light like the day. Around it, in various kinds of precious stones, are the planets, and many stars, the whole encircled by a wide border, in which are minstrels, men kneeling in prayer, females dancing and beating tambourines, horses racing against each other, warriors fighting, wrestlers and gladiators, and birds and beasts, all most truly awful to behold ; for though they are plainly seen to be living, they are too far off to be heard.

" When that infidel warrior, Mahomet of Ghazni, invaded Guzerat, and took possession

of the peninsula of Sumnaut, he found that there were assigned, for the support of the temple, two thousand villages, all purchased by the blacksmith; three thousand priests were constantly in attendance upon the shrine of the god, whose ancient golden image remained unchanged; but in the interior of the figure he discovered precious stones, deposited in it by Kebeer, to such an amount, that he took them as an adequate ransom for the whole province which he had captured, and quitted the country, leaving the temple untouched, and also five hundred golden statues of inferior deities, by which Sumnaut still remains surrounded."

"It must, indeed," exclaimed Auzeem, "be a marvellous structure."

"Well, you may suppose that a man of such unbounded wealth became at last anxious to enjoy repose, and to secure some place of strength, where he might preserve himself and his treasure against any power that might cause him fear. So returning to Cashmere, he fixed upon the woody hills near Cyrinagur, where he found the talismanic stone. Upon careful examination, they were found to be surrounded, on all sides, by a chain of rocks, which he had

fashioned, with great labour, like a wall; immediately beneath it he caused a ditch to be excavated, into which he led whole rivers, until the deep abyss was filled up, and then the country about it, for a considerable distance, whether rock or earth, he caused to be levelled, so that the fortress now resembles a mountain in itself, starting up from a plain. It communicates with that plain, only by a single bridge, which may be drawn up or let down, as the people in the fortress may think fit. It contains within itself, abundant wells of pure water, temples, castles, towers, houses of every description, groves, gardens, fields, pastures, granaries, always filled with provisions for five years, and when you see it, I think you will say that the son of the portrait painter, if he tells the emperor that he can take it by force, deserves to have his head lifted on a pole for all his army to laugh at."

This intelligence was by no means pleasant to the ear of the imperial pilgrim. He could not, however, forbear from inquiring what had become of the talisman with which all these wonders had been wrought.

"By the time the fortress was finished, as

you may easily suppose, the fortunate blacksmith had become a great sovereign, and had a harem full of the most beautiful women, and many sons and daughters. Emperors and kings from all parts came to his palace, among the rest, the sultan of Burhanpour, who, upon beholding the exceeding beauty of Kebeer's eldest daughter, asked her hand in marriage for his son. The union having been agreed upon, the sultan returned home, full of expectation that the bride would be sent to Burhanpour, with a dowry such as the world never saw before. She was, however, equipped in a very frugal manner; but for her dowry, because she was Kebeer's favourite daughter, he presented her with a sealed purse of cloth of gold, in which was contained the talismanic stone. He desired her to say to the monarch of Burhanpour, when presenting him with the stone, that a single scruple of it was worth, at the least, a hundred elephant-loads of gold. He then explained to her its miraculous properties.

“ The princess, attended by a retinue of her father's people, and an ambassador, set out for Burhanpour, and proceeded as far as the river Nerbuddah, within four days' journey from that

city. She was there met by the sultan, with a numerous escort of his nobles, and sumptuous tents were fitted up for her reception. Having made her the usual presents of gold, and beautiful palanquins and horses, he was not a little disappointed when, in return, the princess laid on the floor of her tent only the sealed purse, containing, as she said, a jewel equal in value to the revenue of a hundred provinces. The sultan, on opening the bag, and perceiving nothing in it but what appeared to him to be an ordinary stone, became angry, believing that it was intended by Kebeer as a mark of his contempt for the sovereign of a district, not in itself very wealthy. Taking up the stone indignantly, he flung it into the river, and from the same spot sent back the princess to her father.

“ Kebeer, in return for this insult, contented himself with writing and despatching a letter to the sultan of Burhanpour, in these words:— ‘ The article which I sent thee by my daughter, and of which thou hadst not the common sense to understand the value, would have produced thee, every day, gold by the horse-load. But thou hast cast it into the Nerbuddah, whence it

can never more be recovered.' You may well imagine the grief of the foolish sultan, when he read this letter. He immediately caused the bed of the river to be searched, but the stone was never met with again."

"Except upon one occasion," added Jehangire, "for I remember hearing my father, Acbar, now in paradise, say, that when he set on foot an expedition against a subsequent sultan of Burhanpour, one of the elephants in the imperial train had a ponderous iron chain attached to his fore-leg, as a check upon his furious and intractable temper. In passing the Nerbuddah, the chain came in contact with something, which must have been the very stone in question, that turned it into gold. The circumstance was made known to the emperor, who employed a number of people in searching the river for the talisman, but without success."

Chunder, lifting his withered hands to his eyes, rubbed them, as if he had awoke from a lethargy, and gazing at the emperor, his mouth distended with astonishment, knew not what apology to make for the manner in which he had hitherto addressed the two pilgrims.

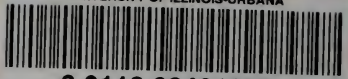
Auzeem, however, relieved him at once from his embarrassment on that point, and lifting the old man from his mattress, desired him to conduct them to the hermit's tower.

END OF VOLUME II.





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